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THE

IRON CHEST.

A Play,

THREE ACTS.

R. B. BUTLAND
MUSIC and PLAYS
37 KING ST. W.
TORONTO, ONT.

BY

GEORGE COLMAN,

THE YOUNGER,

Author of "John Bull," "Poor Gentleman," "Heir-at-Law," "Surrender of Calais," "Review," &c., &c.

WITH THE PREFACE.

LONDON:
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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION, 1796.*

HAVING been, for some time, a labourer in the Drama, and finding it necessary to continue my labours, I cannot help endeavouring to guard the past from misrepresentation, lest my supineness may injure the future. Conscious that a prejudice has been raised against the Play which I now submit to the Reader, and conscious how far I am innocent of raising it, it were stupid to sit down in silence, and thus tacitly acknowledge myself guilty of dulness;—dumbly confess I have been deficient in the knowledge of my trade, damn myself for a bungling workman, and fix a disrepute upon every article which may, hereafter, come from my hands.

Thanks to you, Ladies and Gentlemen! you have been kind customers to me; and I am proud to say that you have stamped a fashion upon my goods. Base, indeed, and ungrateful were the attempt, after your favours, so long received and continued, to impose upon you a clumsy commodity, and boast it to be ware of the first quality that I ever put up to sale! No—on the word of an honest man, I have bestowed no small pains upon this *Iron Chest*, which I offer you. Inspect it; examine it; you see the maker's name is upon it. I do not say it is perfect; I do not pretend to tell you it is of the highest polish; there is no occasion for that:—many of my brethren have presented you with mere *linings for chests*, and you have been content:—but, I trust, you will find that my *Iron Chest* will hold together, that it is tolerably sound, and fit for all the purposes for which it was intended.

Then how came it to fall to pieces, after four days wear?—I will explain that:—but alas! alas! my heart doth yearn, when I think on the task which circumstance has thrust upon me.

Now, by the Spirit of Peace, I swear! were I not still doomed to explore the rugged windings of the Drama, I would wrap myself in mute philosophy, and repose calmly under the dark shade of my grievance, rather than endure the pain, and trouble, of this explanation. I cannot, however, cry "Let the world slide;" I must pursue my journey; and be active to clear away the obstacles that impede my progress.

I am too callous, now, to be annoyed by those innumerable gnats and insects, who daily dart their impotent stings on the literary traveller; and too knowing to dismount, and waste my time in

* This Preface, so celebrated, and so difficult to obtain, is here reprinted as an illustration of plain speaking, not *altogether* undeserved. Mr. Kemble should have acted Sir Edward well; it is clear from all testimony that he did not.

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whipping grasshoppers:—but here is a scowling, sullen, black Bull, right athwart my road;—a monster of magnitude, of the Bœotian breed, perplexing me in my wanderings through the entangled labyrinth of Drury! he stands sulkily before, with sides, seemingly, impenetrable to any lash, and tougher than the Dun Cow of War wick!—His front out-fronting the brazen bull of Perillus!—He has bellowed, Gentlemen! Yea, he hath bellowed a dismal sound! A hollow, unvaried tone, heaved from his very midriff, and striking the listener with torpor!—Would I could pass the animal quietly, for my own sake—and, for his, by Jupiter! I repeat it, I would not willingly harm the Bull.—I delight not in baiting him.—I would jog as gently by him as by the ass, that grazes on the common: but he has obstinately blocked up my way—he has already tossed and gored me, severely—I must make an effort, or he batters me down, and leaves me to bite the dust.

The weapon I must use is not of that brilliant and keen quality, which, in a skilful hand, neatly cuts up the subject, to the delight, and admiration, of the by-standers: It is a homely cudgel of Narrative; a blunt baton of Matter of fact; affording little display of art in the wielder; and so heavy in its nature, that it can merely claim the merit of being appropriate to the opponent at whom it is levelled.

Pray, stand clear!—for I shall handle this club vilely: and if any one come in my way, he may chance to get a rap, which I did not intend to bestow upon him. Good venal and venemous gentlemen, who dabble in ink for pay or from pique, and who have dub'd yourselves *Criticks*, keep your distance now! Run home to your garrets!—Fools! ye are but *Ephemera* at best; and will die soon enough, in the paltry course of your insignificant natures, without thrusting your ears (if there be any left you) into the heat of this perilous action.—Avaunt!—well, well, stay if ye are bent upon it, and be pert and busy; your folly, to me, is of no moment.*

I hasten now to my Narrative.

I agreed to write the following Play, at the instance of the chief Proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre;† who unconditionally, agreed to pay me a certain sum for my labour:—and this certain sum, being much larger than any, I believe, hitherto offered on similar occasions, created no small jealousy among the Parnassian *Sans Culottes*; several of whom have, of late, been vapidly industrious to level, to the muddy surface of their own Castalian ditch, so *Aristocratico-Dramatic* a bargainer. The Play, as fast as written, (piecemeal) was put into rehearsal: But let it here be noted, gentle reader! that a rehearsal, in Drury Lane, (I mean as far as relates to this Iron Chest) is *lucus a* non *lucendo*. They yclep it a rehearsal, I conjecture, because *they do* NOT *rehearse*. I

* Ye who impartially, and conscientiously, sit in diurnal judgment upon modern dramatists, apply not this to yourselves. It aims only at the malevolent, the mean, and the ignorant, who are the disgrace of your order.

† Richard Brinsley Sheridan.—T. H. L.

call the loved shade of GARRICK to witness; nay, I call the less loved presence of the *then* acting Manager to avow,—that there never was one fair rehearsal of the Play.—Never one rehearsal, wherein one, or two, or more, of the Performers, very essential to the piece, were not absent: and *all* the rehearsals which I attended, so slovenly, and irregular, that the ragged master of a theatrical barn might have blush'd for the want of discipline in the pompous Director of his Majesty's Servants, at the vast and astonishing new-erected Theatre Royal, in Drury Lane.

It is well known, to those conversant with the business of the stage, that no perfect judgment can be formed of the length of a Play, apparent to the spectator, nor of the general *effect* intended to be produced, until the private repetitions, among the actors, have reduced the business into something like *lucidus ordo*:—then comes the time for the judicious author to take up his pruning-knife, or handle his hatchet. Then he goes lustily to work, my masters! upon his curtailments, or additions; his transpositions, his loppings, his parings, trimmings, dockings, &c. &c. As in the writing, so in the rehearsal.

> "Ordinis hæc virtus erit et venus, aut ego fallor;"
> "Ut jam nunc dicat, jam nunc debentia dici"
> "Pleraque differat, et præsens in tempus omittat:"
> "Hoc amet, hoc spernat, promissi carminis Auctor."

But, woe is me! while I was patiently waiting the expected crisis, a circumstance occurr'd which compell'd me to watch a crisis of a less agreeable nature. A fever attack'd me, as I sat beneath the damp dome of Drury, and drove me, *malgre moi*, to bed; where I lay during a week, till three hours before the Play was exhibited. In addition to the unavoidable injury arising from the author's absence, MR. KEMBLE, the acting-manager, and principal performer in the piece, was, and had been for a few days, previous to my own illness, confined to his chamber, by indisposition. I lay little stress, indeed, upon his temporary incapacity to perform his managerical duty; his mode of discharging it, hitherto, was productive of little benefit to me;—Still it was *some* drawback—for were a mere Log thrown amidst a Thespian community, and nominated its dull and ponderous Ruler, still the block, while in its place, would carry some sway with:—but his non-attendance as an actor, so much engaged in the Play, was particularly detrimental.

Nay, even the Composer of the music—and here let me breathe a sigh, to the memory of departed worth and genius, as I write the name of STORACE*—even he, could not preside in his department. He was preparing an early flight to that abode of harmony, where choirs of Angels swell the note of welcome to an honest and congenial spirit.

Here then was a direct stop to the business? No such thing.

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* The whole of the beautiful concerted music is now omitted.—T. H. L.

The Troops proceeded without leaders: in the dark, *Messieurs!*—"*Sans* eyes, *Sans* every thing." The Prompter, it is true, a kind of non-commissioned officer, headed the Corps, and a curious march was made of it!

But lo! two days, or three, (I forget which) previous to the public representation, up rose King KEMBLE! like Somnus from his ebon bed, to distribute his dozing directions among his subjects.

"Tardâ gravitate jacentes"
"Vix oculos tollens;"
"Summaque percutiens nutanti pectora mento,"
"Excussit, tandem, sibi se; cubitoque levatus," &c.

He came, saw, and pronounced the Piece to be ripe for exhibition. It was ordered to be performed immediately. News was brought to me, in my sickness, of the mighty *Fiat*; and, although I was told, officially, that due care had been taken to render it worthy of public attention, I submitted with doubt and trembling to the decree. My doubts, too, of this boasted care were not a little increased by a note, which I received from the Prompter, written by the Manager's order, *three hours only*, before the first representation of the Play:—wherein, at this late period, my consent was, abruptly, requested to a transposition of two of the most material scenes in the second act: and the reason given for this curious proposal was, that the present stage of Drury—where the Architect and Machinist, with the judgment and ingenuity of a Politician and a Wit to assist them, had combined to outdo all former theatrical outdoings—was so bunglingly constructed, that there was not time for the carpenters to place the lumbering frame work, on which an Abbey was painted, behind the representation of a Library, without leaving a chasm of ten minutes in the action of the Play; and that in the middle of an act.—Such was the fabrication of that New Stage, whose "*extent* and *powers*" have been so vauntingly advertised, under the classick management of Mr. KEMBLE, in the edifying exhibition of Pantomimes, Processions, Pageants, Triumphal Cars, Milk-white Horses, and Elephants!

As I did not chuse to alter the construction of my Play, without deliberation, merely to screen the ill-construction of the House, I would not listen to the modest, and *well-timed* demand, of turning the progress of my fable *topsy turvey*.

Very ill, and very weak, from the effects of the fever, which had not yet left me, I made an effort, and went to the Theatre, to witness the performance. I found Mr. KEMBLE, in his dressing room, a short time before the curtain was drawn up, taking *Opium Pills:* and, nobody who is acquainted with that gentleman will doubt me when I assert, that they are a medicine which he has long been in the habit of swallowing. He appeared to be very unwell; and seemed, indeed, to have imbibed,

"Poppy and Mandragora,"
"And all the drowsy syrups of the world."

The Play began; and all went smoothly, till a trifling disapprobation was shewn to the character personated by Mr. Dodd;—— the scene in which he was engaged being much *too long*. A proof of the neglect of those whose business it was to have informed me (in my unavoidable absence from the Theatre) that it appeared in the *last rehearsals*, to want curtailment. I considered this, however, to be of no great moment; for Mr. Kemble was to appear immediately in a subsequent scene, and much was expected from his execution of a part, written expressly for his powers.

And, here, let me describe the requisites for the character which I have attempted to draw, that the world may judge whether I have taken a wrong measure of the personage whom I proposed to fit; premising that I have worked for him before with success, and, therefore, it may be presumed that I am somewhat acquainted with the dimensions of his qualifications——I required, then, a man

"Of a tall stature, and of sable hue,"
"Much like the son of Kish, that lofty Jew."

A man of whom it might be said,——

"There's something in his soul"
"O'er which his melancholy sits and broods."

Look at the actor;—and will any body do him the injustice to declare that he is deficient in these qualifications. It would puzzle any author, in any time or country, from Æschylus down, even, to the Translator of *Lodoiska**—and really, gentlemen, I can go no lower—to find a figure and face better suited to the purpose. I have endeavoured moreover, to pourtray *Sir Edward Mortimer* as a man stately in his deportment, reserved in his temper, mysterious, cold, and impenetrable, in his manner: and the candid observers, I trust, will allow that Mr. Kemble is thoroughly adequate to such a personation.

To complete my requisitions, I demanded a performer who could enter into the spirit of a character proceeding upon romantick, half-witted principles, abstracted in his opinions, sophisticated in his reasonings, and who is thrown into situations where his mind and conduct stand, tiptoe, on the extremest verge of probability. Here, surely, I have not mistaken my man; for if I am able to form any opinion of him, as an Actor,—and my opinion, I know, is far from singular,—his chief excellence almost approaches that style which the learned denominate *caricature*. Possibility on the stretch, passion over-leaping its customary bound, movements of the soul, sullen or violent, very rarely seen in the common course of things, yet still *may* be seen—in these is his element. As our language is said to have sunk under the vast conception of Milton, so does the modesty of Nature suffer a depression beneath the unwieldy imaginings of Mr. Kemble. He seldom deigns to accompany the Goddess in her ordinary walks; when she decently

* J. P. Kemble himself.

paces the regular path, with a sober step, and a straight person: but he kindly assists her when she is, doubtless, in need of assistance—when she appears out of her way, crazy and crooked.

The arrogant fault of being more refined than Refinement, more proper than Propriety, more sensible than Sense, which, nine times in ten will disgust the spectator, becomes frequently an advantage to him, in characters of the above description.

In short, Mr. KEMBLE is a paragon-representative of the *Lusus Naturæ:* and were Mr. KEMBLE sewed up in a skin, to act a hog in a pantomime, he would act a hog with six legs better than a hog with four.

If any one ask why I chose to sketch a *Lusus Naturæ*, when it might better become an author to be chaste in his delineation, I can only reply, that I did so to obtain the assistance of Mr. KEMBLE in his best manner; and that now I do most heartily repent me: for never, sure, did man place the main strength of his building upon so rotten a prop!

Well, the great actor was discovered, as *Sir Edward Mortimer*, in his library. Gloom and desolation sat upon his brow; and he was habited, from the wig to the shoe-string, with the most studied exactness. Had one of King CHARLES the First's portraits walked from the frame, upon the boards of the Theatre, it could not have afforded a truer representation of ancient and melancholy dignity.

The picture could not have looked better—but, in justice to the picture, it must also be added, that, the picture could scarcely have acted worse.

The spectators, who gaped with expectation at his first appearance, yawned with lassitude before his first *exit*. It seemed, however, that illness had totally incapacitated him from performing the business he had undertaken. For his mere illness he was entitled to pity; for his conduct under it, he, undoubtedly, deserved censure.

How can Mr. KEMBLE, as a Manager, and an Actor, justify his thrusting himself forward in a new play, the material interest of which rested upon his own powers, at a moment when he must be conscious that he had no powers at all?—Mr. KEMBLE owes a duty to the public, to his employer, and to an author writing for his employer's house. How does he treat the claimants upon his service, in this instance? Exactly thus—he insults the understanding of the first, and injures the interests of the two last, by calling in a crowd to an entertainment which he knows he must mar.

I requested him, at the end of the first act, to order an apology to be made for his indisposition, lest the uninformed, or malicious, might attribute the ponderosity of the performer to the heaviness of the author. I was anxious to disavow all right and title to those pigs of lead which did not belong to me, and of which Mr. KEMBLE was the just proprietor. But no—he peremptorily declared he would not suffer an apology to be made! It should have been made (if at all) before the Play began.—Then why was it not made?—He did not, *then*, imagine that illness would have

disabled him.—So, then, a man quits his chamber, after an attack which has, evidently, weakened him extremely, and he has no bodily feel, no internal monitor, to whisper to him that he is feeble, and that he has not recovered sufficient strength to make a violent exertion! This mode of reasoning, adopted by Mr. KEMBLE, is much in the spirit of that clown's, who did not know whether he could play on a fiddle till he tried. Be it noted, also, that Mr. KEMBLE was swallowing his opium pills, *before* the play began, *because he was ill*:—but opium causes strange oblivious effects; and these pills must have occasioned so sudden a lapse in Mr. KEMBLE's memory, that he forgot when he took them, why he took them, or that he had taken them at all. The dose must have been very powerful. Still, for the reasons already stated, I pressed for an apology; still Mr. KEMBLE continued obstinate in opposing it. His indisposition, he said, was evident; he had coughed very much upon the stage, and an apology would make him "*look like a fool.*"

Good-nature in excess becomes weakness; but I never yet found, in the confined course of my reading, that good nature and folly would bear the same definition: Mr. KEMBLE, it should seem (and he produced, at least, managerical *authority* for it) considered the terms to be synonimous. Freely, however, forgiving him for his unkindness in refusing to gratify a poor devil of an author,—who, very anxious for his reputation, was very moderate in his request—I do, in all Christian charity, most sincerely wish that Mr. KEMBLE may never find greater cause to *look like a fool* than an apology for his indisposition.

At length, by dint of perseverance, I gained my point. A proprietor of the Theatre was called in upon the occasion, whose mediation in my favour carried more weight with the Acting Manager than a hapless Dramatist's entreaty; and the apology was, in due form, delivered to the audience.

One third of the play, only, was yet performed; and I was, now, to make up my mind, like an unfortunate traveller, to pursue my painful journey, through two stages more, upon a broken-down Poster, on whose back lay all the baggage for my expedition. Miserably, and most heavily in hand, did the Poster proceed!—He groaned, he lagged, he coughed, he winced, he wheezed!—Never was seen so sorry a jade! The audience grew completely soured; and, once completely soured, every thing, naturally, went wrong. They recurred to their disapprobation of poor DODD—and observe what this produced. I must relate it.

Mr. KEMBLE had just plodded through a scene, regardless of those loud and manifest tokens, that the Critics delighted not in the "*drowsy hums*" with which he "*rang night's yawning peal*," when DODD appeared to him on the Stage; at whose entrance the clamour was renewed. Then, and *not till then*, did the Acting Manager, who had been deaf as any post to the supplications of the author for an apology—then, did he appear suddenly seized with a fit of good nature. He voluntarily came forward "*to look like a fool*," and beg the indulgence of the town. He feared he was the unhappy

cause of their disapprobation; he entreated their patience; and hoped he should, shortly, gain strength, to enable them to judge, on a future night, what he handsomely termed the *merits* of the Play. Here was friendship! Here was adroitness! While the Public were testifying their disgust at the Piece, through the medium of poor Dodd, Mr. Kemble, with unexampled generosity, took the whole blame upon his own shoulders, and heroically saved the author, by so timely an interposition. I was charmed with this master-stroke, and at the impulse of the moment, I thanked him. But, alas! how narrow is the soul of man! how distrustful in its movements, how scanty in its acknowledgements, how perplexing to itself in its combinations! Had I, afterwards, looked on the thing simply, and nakedly, by itself, why the thing is a good-natured thing: but I must be putting other circumstances by the side of it, with a plague to me! I must be puzzling myself to see if all fits; if all is of a piece. And what is the result?—Miserable that I am! I have lost the pleasure of evincing a gratitude, which I thought I owed, because I no longer feel myself a debtor. Had I abandoned my mind to that placid negligence, that luxurious confidence, which the inconsiderate enjoy, it had never occurred to me that Mr. Kemble, forseeing, perhaps, that an aggrieved author might not be totally silent—step'd forward with this speech to the public, as a kind of *salvo*, (should a statement be made) for his rigidity in the first instance. It had never occurred to me that Mr. Kemble was sufficiently hissed, yawned at, laughed at, and coughed down, to have made his apology *before* Mr. Dodd appeared: It had never occurred to me that his making his apology at a previous moment would have answered the same purpose to *me*, and not to *him*: It had never occurred, in short, that there is such a thing as ostentatious humility, and a politic act of kindness; and that I should have waited the sequel of a man's conduct, before I thanked him for one instance of seeming good-will, close upon the heels of stubborn ill-nature, and in the midst of existing, and palpable injury. The sequel will shew that I was premature in my acknowledgment—but before I come to the sequel, a word or two (I will be brief) to close my account of this, first night's eventful history. The Piece was concluded, and *given out*, for a second performance, with much opposition.

Friends, who never heard the Play read, shook their heads; Friends, who *had* heard it read, scarcely knew it again: Several, I doubt not, of the impartial, who chose to be active, actively condemned; and enemies, of course, rejoiced in an opportunity of joining them.

No opportunity could be fairer. The Play was, at least, a full hour too long; and had *Job* himself sat to hear it, he must have lost his patience. But, if, gentle reader, thou possessest *Job's* quality, and hast followed me thus far, in my Narrative, it will appear to thee (for I doubt not thy retention and combination) that I was unable to curtail it effectually, at the proper time—the last rehearsals. I was, then, laid flat, my dear friend, as you remember I have told you, by a fever. The acting manager *did*

attend the last rehearsals, and suffered the piece to be produced, *uncut*, to "drag its slow length along," surcharged with all its own incapacity, and all his opium.

How, then, do I stand indebted, according to the articles of this night's statement? I owe to Mr. KEMBLE.

For his illness	COMPASSION,
For his conduct under it	CENSURE,
For his refusing to make an apology . . .	A SMILE!
For his making an apology	A SNEER,
For his mismanagement	A GROAN,
For his acting	A HISS.

This account is somewhat like the Tavern bill, picked from Falstaff's pocket, when he is snorting behind the arras. There is but one halfpennyworth of compassion to this intolerable deal of blame.

Now for the sequel.—I have shewn, I think that Mr. KEMBLE, in the first instance, undertook a duty which he *could* not perform: I have now to affirm, with all the difficulty of proving a negative full in my face, that he afterwards, made a mockery of discharging a duty which he *would* not perform.

After a week's interval, to give him time to recruit his strength; and the Author time to curtail, and alter the Play; (for the impression which the Mis-Manager and Actor, had contrived to stamp rendered alteration necessary) it was a second time represented.

I must, here, let the uninformed reader into a secret;—but I must go to Newmarket to make him understand me.—No, Epsom will do as well; and that is nearer home.—It often happens, at a Race, that a known Horse, from whom good sport is expected, disappoints the crowd by *walking over the course*.—He does not miss an inch of the ground; but affords not one jot of diversion, unless some pleasure is received in contemplating his figure. Now, an actor can do the very same thing. He can *walk over his part:* He can miss no more of his words than the Horse does of his way: he can be as dull, and as tedious, and as good-looking as the Horse, in his progress:—The only difference between the two animals is,—that the Horse brings in him who bets upon him a gainer; but the luckless wight who has a large stake depending upon the actor is, decidedly, certain to lose. There is a trick, too, that the Jockies practice, which is called, I think, *playing booty*. This consists in appearing to use their utmost endeavour to reach the winning-post first, when they are already determined to come in the last. The consequence is, that all, except the knowing ones, attribute no fault to the jockey, but damn the Horse for a sluggard.—An actor can *play booty* if he chuses:—he can pretend to whip and spur, and do his best, when the Connoisseur knows, all the while, he is shirking:—but Sluggard is the unmerited appellation given by the majority to the innocent Author.

Mr. KEMBLE chiefly chose to be Horse, and *walk'd over the ground*. Every now and then (but scarcely enough to save appearances) he gave a slight touch of the Jockey, and *played booty*.

Whether the language which is put into the mouth of *Sir Edward Mortimer* be above mediocrity, or below contempt, is not to the present purpose: but the words he is made to utter certainly convey a meaning; and the circumstances of the scenes afford an opportunity to the performer of playing off his mimick emotions, his transitions of passion, his starts, and all the trickeries of his trade. The devil a trick did Mr. KEMBLE play but a very scurvy one! His emotions and passions were so rare, and so feeble, that they season'd his general insipidity, like a single grain of wretched pepper thrown into the largest dose of water gruel that ever was administer'd to an invalid. For the most part, he toil'd on, line after line, in a dull current of undiversified sound, which stole upon the ear far more drowsily than the distant murmurings of Lethe; with no attempt to break the lulling stream, or check its sleep-inviting course.

Frogs in a marsh, flies in a bottle, wind in a crevice, a preacher in a field, the drone of a bagpipe, all, all yielded to the inimitable, and soporific monotony of Mr. KEMBLE!

The very best Dramatic writing, where passion is express'd, if deliver'd languidly by the Actor, will fail in its intended effect: and I will be bold enough to say that were the *Curse in King Lear* new to an audience, and they heard it utter'd, for the first time, in a croak, fainter than a crow's in a consumption, it would pass unnoticed, or appear vapid to the million.

If I raise a critical clatter about my ears, by this assertion, which some may twist into a profanation of Shakspeare, I leave it to Horace, who can fight battles better than I, to defend me,

> " Si dicentis erunt fortunis absona dicta,"
> " Romani tollent pedites equitesque cachinnum."

That Mr. KEMBLE did not misconceive the Part is certain; for he told me, some time before the Play was acted, that he fear'd the exertions requisite, in *Sir Edward Mortimer*, would strain his lungs more than *Octavian*, in the *Mountaineers*.

That he can strain his lungs to good purpose, in *Octavian*, is well known; and, after this, his own intimation, how will he escape the charge of wilful and direct delinquency, when, with such a conception of the part, and with health recover'd, he came forward in the true spirit of *Bottom*, and "*aggravated his voice so that he roared you as gently as any sucking dove?*"*

He insulted the Town, and injured his Employer, and the Author, sufficiently in the first instance: in the second he added to the insult and injury an hundred fold: and as often as he mangled the Character (three or four times, I am uncertain which, after the first night's performance) he heap'd aggravation upon aggravation.

The most miserable murmur, that ever disgraced the walls of a Theatre, could not have been a stronger drawback than Mr. KEMBLE.

* Mr. KEMBLE informed me, previous to the second representation of the Play, that he felt himself capable of exertion.

He was not only dull in himself but the cause of dulness in others. Like the baleful *Upas of Java*, his pestiferous influence infected all around him.—When two Actors came forward, to keep up the Shuttlecock of scenicfiction, if one plays slovenly the other cannot maintain his game. Poor BANNISTER, Jun. would he speak out (but I have never press'd him, and never shall press him to say a word upon the subject) could bear ample testimony to the truth of this remark. He suffer'd like a man under the cruelty of *Mezentius*. All alive himself, he was tied to a corpse, which he was fated to drag about with him, scene after scene, which weigh'd him down, and depress'd his vigour. Miss FARREN, too, who might animate anything but a soul of lead, and face of iron, experienced the same fate.

I could proceed, and argue, and reason, and discuss, and tire the reader, as I have tired myself (it is now, my good friend, one o'clock in the morning) to prove, further, that Mr. KEMBLE was unsound in my cause, and that he ruin'd my Play:——But I will desist here. I think I have *prosed* enough to manifest that my arguments are not unfounded.

They who are experienced in *Dramatics*, will, I trust, see that I have made a fair *extenuation* of myself—they who are impartial, will, I hope, be convinced that I have set down *nought in malice*.

The only question that may arise to shake, materially, the credit of all I have said, is——"How is it probable that Mr. KEMBLE should injure you thus, without provocation? Is it in nature? Is it in man?" I can merely answer, that, I am unconscious of having given him a cause for provocation;—that if I have given him cause, he has taken a bad mode of revenge; that Mr. KEMBLE'S nature has frequently puzzled me in my observation upon it; and that I think him a very *extraordinary man*.

But let him take this with him, should this crudely written preface ever fall in his way. I have committed it to paper *currente calamo*. I mean no allusion, no epithet, to apply to him as a private individual. As a private individual, I give him not that notice which it might, here, be impertinent to bestow:——but I have an undoubted right to discuss his merits, or demerits, in his public capacities of Manager and Actor: and my cause of complaint gives me a good reason as well as a right. His want of conduct, his neglect, his injustice, his oppression, his finesse, his person, his face, are in this point of view all open to my animadversion.

"He is my goods, my chattels;"
"My Horse, my Ox, my Ass, my any thing."

And I would animadvert still further, did I not think I had already said sufficient to gain the object of guarding my own reputation. That object has solely sway'd me in dwelling so long upon a "plain tale," encumber'd with so fatiguing a Hero as JOHN KEMBLE.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE READER.

I AM indebted for the ground-work of this Play to a Novel, entitled "*Things as They Are, or the Adventures of Caleb Williams; written by William Godwin.*" Much of Mr. Godwin's story I have omitted; much, which I have adopted, I have compress'd; much I have added; and much I have taken the liberty to alter.

All this I did that I might fit it, in the best of my judgment, to the stage.

I have cautiously avoided all tendency to that which, vulgarly, (wrongly, in many instances,) is termed Politics; with which, many have told me, *Caleb Williams* teems.

The stage has, now, no business with Politics: and, should a Dramatic Author endeavour to dabble in them, it is the Lord Chamberlain's office to check his attempts, before they meet the eye of the Public. I perused Mr. Godwin's book as a tale replete with interesting incident, ingenious in its arrangement, masterly in its delineation of character, and forcible in its language. I considered it as right of Common; and, by a title which custom has given to Dramatists, I enclosed it within my theatrical paling. However I may have till'd the land, I trust he discovers no intentional injury to him, in my proceeding.

To all the Performers (excepting Mr. KEMBLE) I offer my hearty thanks for their exertions; which would have served me more, had not an actor, "*dark as Erebus,*" cast a gloom upon them, which none of their efforts, however brilliant, could entirely disperse.

But this does not diminish my obligations to them:—so much, indeed, I owe to them, that, when the Play was last performed, it was rising, spite of *Erebus*, in favour with the Town. It was, then, advertised, day after day, at the bottom of the Play bills, for repetition, till the promissory advertisement became laughable; and, at length, the advertisement and the Play were dropt together.

If, after the foregoing Preface, I should at a future period, bring the Play forward, in the Haymarket Theatre, I am fully aware of the numbers who, from party, and pique, may now oppose it. I am aware, too, of the weight which a first impression leaves upon the minds of the most candid:—Still, so strong is my confidence in the genuine decision of a London audience, who have a fair opportunity of exercising their judgment, and feelings, (which they have not had, yet, in respect to this play), that I believe I shall venture an appeal.

The Piece is, now, printed as it was acted on the *first night;* that they who peruse it may decide whether, even in that shape, (with all the misfortunes, before enumerated, with which it was doomed to struggle) it should be, for ever, consigned to moulder on the shelf.

The Songs, Duets, and Chorusses, are intended merely as vehicles for musical effect. Some Critics have pompously called them

Lyrick Poetry—that, by raising them to dignity, they may more effectually degrade them: as men lift a stone very high, before they let it fall, when they would completely dash it to pieces.

I, now, leave the gentle reader to the perusal of the Play—and, lest my Father's memory may be injured by mistakes; and, in the confusion of after-times, the *Translator of Terence*, and the *Author of The Jealous Wife*, be supposed guilty of the *Iron Chest*, I shall, were I to reach the Patriarchal longevity of Methusaleh, continue (in all my Dramatic publications) to subscribe myself

GEORGE COLMAN, *the Younger*.

Piccadilly,
July 20th, 1796.

POSTSCRIPT.

"*Inveni Portum!*"

I HAVE, now, previous to the publication of this edition of *The Iron Chest*, made the appeal suggested in the foregoing Advertisement. I have produced the Play at my own Theatre, in the Haymarket.

Reflecting on the prejudice it would encounter, my hopes of success were very moderate;—had my expectations, however, been *most sanguine*, I should not have suffered a disappointment. The Piece was received with strong marks of approbation; it is now, nightly, performing; and, if numerous auditors, and full applause, can gratify a Dramatic Author, I am gratified completely.

The Play, as now representing, varies from the printed copy in scarcely more than six lines, except in mere curtailment: and it is printed (as I have already stated) as it was first acted, in Drury Lane.

The chief Performers new in the Piece, at the Haymarket, are *Messrs. Elliston*, *Aickin*, *Fawcett*, *Palmer*, *C. Kemble*, *Mrs. Kemble*, and *Mrs. Bland*. Their efforts to serve me demand my warmest acknowledgements; to dwell upon their abilities would be superfluous. Suffice it to say, that *all* the representatives of the *Dramatis Personæ* did ample credit to themselves; and added, I trust, no small portion of reputation to the Theatre.

But, let not my *Corps Dramatique* think it invidious if I single *Mr. Elliston* from their number, who is peculiarly predicamented in coming forward in a character of which so much has already been said. This young Actor, new this summer, to the boards of a London theatre, with a juvenility of person, in this instance unfavourable to him, has sustained a part, written, expressly for the powers of another man, (and that man as strong a mannerist as ever wore a buskin) in a mode which might well become an

established veteran of the stage. It is far from my intention to draw general comparisons—but it is impossible, here, to avoid speaking of the two actors of *Sir Edward Mortimer*. The first mangled, and finally sunk my Play; the second healed the wounds it had received, and is, now, (with the rest of his brethren) ably supporting it. It is bare truth to say, that *Mr. Elliston's* conduct to me, and his performance of the character, have been the very reverse of *Mr. Kemble's*:—were it *more* than bare truth, it would be a high compliment.

I, now, beg the Reader to compare this *Postscript* with the *Preface*; and, I think, he will readily observe, that the one most fully establishes the other—Here are facts, experimental facts, now given, and, nightly, continuing to be given, to corroborate the arguments I have advanced, and to prove that my complaint is well founded.

I must, here, *repeat* that I have had but one motive in these statements:—the motive which I have avowed in the conclusion of my Preface.—I have effected my purpose;—and I feel not the least ill will towards *Mr. Kemble*—but my reason tells me that I had better go to Constantinople, to do him a service, than put future faith in his management, and his acting.

As to the poor, pelting *Paragraphists*, and *Pamphleteers*,—he cannot, I am sure, be pleased in observing the contemptible dirt with which they have endeavoured to bespatter me. I have, I think, stated that they are below my notice:—but, so sore is man, spite of his boasted apathy, that I cannot help giving, here, a general reply to their animadversions.

My language will, I trust, be found more liberal than the jargon of my opponents; and my *arguments* fully as *convincing*. Thus I address them:

Gentlemen ! ! !

Pshaw! Pish! Pooh! Ha, ha, ha!

Your obedient,

G. COLMAN, *the Younger*.

Piccadilly,
September 5, 1796.

First performed at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, on March 12, 1796.

"THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

"BY MR. KEMBLE," &c.

Drury-Lane Play Bill.

"I had as lieve the Town-Crier had spoke my Lines."

Shakspeare.

Characters.

SIR EDWARD MORTIMER	MR. KEMBLE!!!
FITZHARDING (*his elder Brother*)	MR. WROUGHTON.
WILFORD (*Secretary to Sir Edward*)	MR. BANNISTER, jun.
ADAM WINTERTON (*the Steward*)	MR. DODD.
RAWBOLD	MR. BARRYMORE.
SAMSON RAWBOLD (*his Son*)	MR. SUETT.
*BOY	MASTER WELSH.
COOK	MR. HOLLINGSWORTH.
PETER	MR. BANKS.
WALTER	MR. MADDOKS.
SIMON	MR. WEBB.
GREGORY	MR. TRUEMAN.
ARMSTRONG	MR. KELLY.
ORSON	MR. R. PALMER.
FIRST ROBBER	MR. DIGNUM.
SECOND ROBBER	MR. SEDGWICK.
THIRD ROBBER	MR. BANNISTER.
ROBBER'S BOY	MASTER WEBB.
LADY HELEN	MISS FARREN.
BLANCH	MRS. GIBBS.
*DAME RAWBOLD	MISS TIDSWELL.
BARBARA	SIGNORA STORACE.
JUDITH	MISS DE CAMP.

SCENE.—*The New Forest, in Hampshire, and on its Borders.*

[For Costumes, see the end of the Piece.]

* Now omitted.

THE IRON CHEST.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The inside of Rawbold's Cottage*, L; BARBARA *seated*, R.; SAMSON *standing in the front of the stage*, C.; *a taper burning on a table*, R. C.; *a door*, L. C.; *the whole scene exhibits poverty and wretchedness.*

SAMSON. Five o'clock, and father not yet returned from the New Forest! An he come not shortly, the sun will rise, and roast the venison on his shoulders.—Sister Barbara! —Well, your rich men have no bowels for us lowly! they little think while they are gorging on the fat haunch of a goodly buck, what fatigues we poor honest souls undergo in stealing it.—Why, sister Barbara!

BARBARA. I am here, brother Samson. (*getting up*)

SAMSON. Here! marry, out upon you for an idle baggage! why, you crawl like a snail.

BARBARA. (L. C.) I prithee, now, do not chide me, Samson.

SAMSON. 'Tis my humour. I am father's head man in his poaching. The rubs I take from him, who is above me, I hand down to you, who are below me. 'Tis the way of office—where every miserable devil domineers it over the next more miserable devil that's under him. You may scold sister Margery, an you will—she's your younger by a twelvemonth.

BARBARA. Truly, brother, I would not make any one unhappy, for the world. I am content to do what I can to please, and to mind the house.

SAMSON. Truly, a weighty matter! Thou art e'en ready to hang thyself, for want of something to while away time. What hast thou much more to do, than to trim the faggots, nurse thy mother, boil the pot, patch our jackets, kill the poultry, cure the hogs, feed the pigs, and comb the children?

BARBARA. Many might think that no small charge, Samson.

SAMSON. A mere nothing. While father and I (bate us but the mother and children) have the credit of purloining every single thing that you have the care of. We are up early, and down late, in the exercise of our industry.

BARBARA. I wish father and you would give up the calling.

SAMSON. No—there is one keen argument to prevent us.

BARBARA. What's that, brother?

SAMSON. Hunger. Would'st have us be rogues, and let our family starve? Give up poaching and deer stealing! Oons! dost think we have no conscience? Yonder sits mother, poor soul! (*points off* R.)—old, helpless, and crazy.

BARBARA. Alas! brother, 'tis heart-aching to look upon her. This very time three years she got her maim. It was a piteous tempest.

SAMSON. Aye—'twas rough weather. The cottage was blown down—the barn fired—father undone—Well, landlords are flinty hearted—no help! what then? We live, don't we? (*sullenly*)

BARBARA. Troth, brother, very sadly. Father has grown desperate; all is fallen to decay. We live by pilfering on the forest—and our poor mother distracted, and unable to look to the house. The rafter. which fell in the storm, struck so heavy upon her brain, I fear me, 'twill never again be settled. The little ones too—scarce clothed—hungry—almost starving!—Indeed, we are a very wretched family.

SAMSON. Hark! Methought I heard a tread. (*knock at door*, L. C.) Hist, be wary. The word?

RAWBOLD. (*without*) Roebuck.

SAMSON *opens the door in flat, and* RAWBOLD *enters.*

RAWBOLD. Bar the door. So, softly.

SAMSON. What success, father?

RAWBOLD. Good: my limbs ache for't. How you stand! (*to* SAMSON) The chair, you gander.

SAMSON. (*to* BARBARA) Why, how you stand! the chair, you gander! (*they bring* RAWBOLD *a chair—he sits*, C.)

RAWBOLD. Here—take my gun—'tis unscrewed. The keepers are abroad. I had scarce time to get it in my pocket. (*he pulls the gun from a pocket under his coat, in three pieces, which* SAMSON *screws together, while they are talking*) Fie! 'tis sharp work! Barbara, you jade, come hither.

SAMSON. (L. C.) Barbara, you shade, come hither.

RAWBOLD. Who bid thee chide her, lout! Kiss thy old father, wench. Kiss me I say.—So—why dost tremble? I am rough as a tempest. Evil fortune has blown my lowering nature into turbulence: but thou art a blossom that dost bend thy head so sweetly under my gusts of passion, 'tis pity they should e'er harm thee.

BARBARA. Indeed, father, I am glad to see you safe returned.

RAWBOLD. I believe thee. Take the keys. Go to the locker, in the loft, and bring me a glass to recruit me.

BARBARA *goes out,* L. 2 E. SAMSON *puts off the gun,* R., *and goes down* R. C.

SAMSON. Well, father, and so——

RAWBOLD. Peace.—I ha' shot a buck.

SAMSON. O rare! Of all the sure aims on the borders of the New Forest, here, give me old Gilbert Rawbold; though I, who am his son, say it, that should not say it. Where have you stow'd him, father?

RAWBOLD. Under the furze, behind the hovel. Come night again, we will draw him in, boy. I have been watch'd.

SAMSON. Watched! Oh, the pestilence! our trade will be spoil'd if the game-keepers be after us. The law will persecute us, father.

RAWBOLD. Dost know Mortimer?

SAMSON. What, Sir Edward Mortimer? Aye, sure. He is head keeper of the forest. 'Tis he who has shut himself up in melancholy. Sees no rich, and does so much good to the poor.

RAWBOLD. He has done me naught but evil. A gun cannot be carried on the border, here, but he has scent on't at a league's distance. He is a thorn to me. His scouts this night were after me— all on the watch. I'll be revenged—I'll—So, the brandy.

Enter BARBARA, *with the liquor*, L. 2 E.

(*after drinking*) 'Tis right, i'faith!

SAMSON. That 'tis, I'll be sworn; for I smuggled it myself. We do not live so near the coast for nothing.

RAWBOLD. Sir Edward Mortimer, look to it!

BARBARA. Sir Edward Mortimer! Oh, dear father, what of him?

RAWBOLD. Aye, now thou art all agog! Thou would'st hear somewhat of that smooth-tongued fellow, his secretary—his clerk, Wilford; whom thou so often meet'st in the forest. I have news on't. Look how you walk thither again. What, thou would'st betray me to him, I warrant;—conspire against your father.

SAMSON. Aye, conspire against your father—and your tender loving brother, you viper, you!

BARBARA. Beshrew me, father, I meant no harm: and, indeed, indeed, Wilford is as handsome a—I mean as good a youth as ever breathed. If I thought he meant ill by you, I should hate him.

RAWBOLD. When didst see him last?—Speak!

BARBARA. You terrify me so, father, I am scarce able to speak. Yesternoon, by the copse. 'Twas but to read with him the book of sonnets he gave me.

SAMSON. That's the way your sly, grave rogues, work into the hearts of the females. I never knew any good come of a girl's reading sonnets, with a learned clerk, under a copse.

RAWBOLD. Let me hear no more of your meetings. I am content to think you would not plot my undoing.

BARBARA. I?—O father!

RAWBOLD. But he may plot yours. Mark me—Fortune has thrust me forth to prowl, like the wolf;—but the wolf is anxious for its young. I am an outcast, whom hunger has hardened. I violate the law; but feeling is not dead within me: and, callous villain as I am accounted, I would tear that greater villain piecemeal, who would seduce my child, and rob an old man of the little remains of comfort wretchedness has left him. (*a knocking at the door in flat*)

WILFORD. (*without*) Hilliho! ho!

RAWBOLD. How now!

SAMSON. There! an they be not after us already. I'll —We have talk'd, too, till 'tis broad day-light.

WILFORD. (*without*) Open, good master Rawbold; I would speak to you suddenly.

BARBARA. Oh heaven! 'tis the voice of Wilford himself.

RAWBOLD. Wilford! I'm glad on't—Now he shall—I'm glad on't. Open the door: quickly I say. He shall smart for it.

SAMSON. Are you mad, father? 'Tis *we* shall smart for it. Let in the keeper's head man! The hind quarter of a buck has hung these fourteen days in the pantry.

RAWBOLD. Open, I say.

SAMSON. Oh Lord! I defy any secretary's nose not to smell stolen venison the moment 'tis thrust into our hovel.

SAMSON *opens the door. Enter* WILFORD, *door in flat—comes down* R. *of* RAWBOLD.

WILFORD. Save you, good people. You are Gilbert Rawbold, as I take it.

RAWBOLD. I am. Your message here, young man, bodes me no good: but I *am* Gilbert Rawbold—and here's my daughter. Dost know her?

WILFORD. Ah, Barbara, good wench! how fares it with you?

RAWBOLD. Look on her well—then consult your own conscience. 'Tis difficult, haply, for a secretary to find one. You are a villain.

WILFORD. You lie. Hold, I crave pardon. You are her father. She is innocent, and you are unhappy: I respect virtue and misfortune too much to shock the one or insult the other.

RAWBOLD. 'Sdeath! why meet my daughter in the forest?

WILFORD. Because I love her.

RAWBOLD. And would ruin her.

WILFORD. That's a strange way of shewing one's love, methinks. I have a simple notion, Gilbert, that the thought of having taken a base advantage of a poor girl's affection might go nigh to break a man's sleep, and give him unquiet dreams; now, I love my night's rest, and shall do nothing to disturb it.

RAWBOLD. Would'st not poison her mind?

WILFORD. 'Tis not my method, friend, of dosing a patient. Look ye, Gilbert; her mind is a fair flower, struck in the rude soil, here, of surrounding ignorance, and smiling in the chill of poverty:—I would fain cheer it with the little sunshine I possess of comfort and information. My parents were poor like her's; should occasion serve, I might, haply, were all parties agreed, make her my wife. To offer ought else would affect her, you, and myself; and I have no talent at making three people uneasy at the same time.

RAWBOLD. Your hand. On your own account, we are friends.

BARBARA. O dear father!

RAWBOLD. Be silent. Now to your errand. 'Tis from Mortimer.

WILFORD. I come from Sir Edward.

RAWBOLD. I know his malice. He would oppress me with his power. He would starve me and my family. Search my house.

SAMSON. No, father, no. (*aside*) You forget the hind quarter in the pantry. (*on* L., *then behind to* R.)

RAWBOLD. Let him do his worst: but let him beware. A tyrant; a villain!

WILFORD. Harkye—he is my master. I owe him my gratitude;—every thing;—and had you been any but my Barbara's father, and spoken so much against him, my indignation had worked into my knuckles, and cramm'd the words down your rusty throat.

SAMSON. I do begin to perceive how this will end. Father will knock down the secretary as flat as a buck.

RAWBOLD. Why am I singled out? Is there no mark for the vengeance of office to shoot its shaft at but me? This morning, as he dogg'd me in the forest——

WILFORD. Hush, Rawbold; keep your own counsel. Should you make it public, he must notice it.

RAWBOLD. Did he not notice it?

WILFORD. No matter—but he has sent me thus early, Gilbert, with this relief to your distresses, which he has heard of. Here are twenty marks for you and your family.

RAWBOLD. From Sir Edward Mortimer?

WILFORD. 'Tis his way; but he would not have it mentioned. He is one of those judges who, in their office, will never warp the law to save offenders; but his private charity bids him assist the needy, before their necessities drive them to crimes which his public duty must punish.

RAWBOLD. Did Mortimer do this! did he! heaven bless him! Oh, young man, if you knew half the misery—my wife—my children—Shame on't! I have stood many a tug, but the drops, now, fall in spite of me. I am not ungrateful; but I cannot stand it. (*shakes his hand*) We will talk of Barbara when I have more man about me.

Exit, R. 1 E.

WILFORD. Farewell. I must home to the lodge, quickly. Ere this, I warrant, I am look'd for.

BARBARA. Farewell.

SAMSON. Farewell. (*shakes hands*) We will talk of Barbara when I have more man about me.

Takes off BARBARA, R. 1 E. WILFORD *goes off door in* F.

SCENE II.—*An old-fashioned Hall in Sir Edward Mortimer's Lodge.* (*2nd grooves*)

Several SERVANTS *cross the stage with flagons, tankards, cold meat, &c., &c., from* R. *to* L.; ADAM WINTERTON *following*, R.

WINTER. Softly, varlets, softly! See you crack none of the stone flagons. Nay, 'tis plain, your own breakfasts be toward by your skuttling thus. A goodly morning! Why, you giddy-pated knave (*to* PETER), is it so you carry a dish of pottery? No heed of our good master Sir Edward Mortimer's ware. Fie, Peter Pickbone, fie!

PETER. I am in haste, master steward to break my fast.

WINTER. To break thy fast! to break thy neck it should seem. Ha! ha! good, i'faith. Go thy ways, knaves. (*Exit* PETER, L.) 'Tis thus the rogues ever have me. I would fain be angry with them; but, straight, a merry jest passeth across me, and my choler is over. To break

thy neck, it should seem! ha! ha! 'twas well conceited, by St. Thomas!—My table-book for the business of the day. Ah, my memory holds not as it did. It needs the spur. (*looking over his book*) Nine and forty years have I been house-steward and butler. Let me see.—Let me see—my tables. (*looking over them and singing*)

When birds do carol on the bush,
With a heigh ho nonny—heigho!

These fatigues of office somewhat wear a man. I have had a long lease on't. I ha' seen out Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, and King James. 'Tis e'en almost time that I should retire, to begin to enjoy myself. Eh! by St. Thomas! hither trips the fair mistress Blanch. Of all the waiting gentlewomen I ever look'd on, during the two last reigns, none stirred my fancy like this little rosebud.

Enter BLANCH, L.

BLANCH. A good day, good Adam Winterton.

WINTER. What wag! what tulip! I never see thee but I am a score of years the younger.

BLANCH. Nay, then, let us not meet often, or you will soon be in your second childhood.

WINTER. What, you come from your mistress, the Lady Helen, in the forest here; and would speak with Sir Edward Mortimer, I warrant.

BLANCH. I would. Is his melancholy worship stirring yet?

WINTER. Fie, you madcap! He is my master and your lady's friend.

BLANCH. Yes, truly, it seems, her only one, poor lady; he protects her now she is left an orphan.

WINTER. A blessing on his heart! I would it were merrier. Well, she is much beholden to Sir Edward for his consolation; and he never affords her his advice, but his bounty is sure to follow it.

BLANCH. Just so a crow will nourish its nestling; he croaks first and then gives her food.

WINTER. Ha! ha! good i'faith!—but wicked. Thy company will corrupt and lead me astray. Should they happen to marry (and I have my fancies on't), I'll dance a galliard with thee in the hall, on the round oak table.

'Sbud! when I was a youth, I would ha' caper'd with St. Vitus, and beat him.

BLANCH. You are as likely to dance, now, as they to marry. What has hindered them, if the parties be agreed? —yet I have now been with my mistress these two years! since Sir Edward first came hither, and placed her in the cottage, hard by his lodge.

WINTER. Tush! family reasons. Thou knowest nothing: thou art scarce catch'd. Two years back, when we came from Kent, and Sir Edward first entered on his office, here, of head keeper, thou wert a colt, running wild about New Forest. I hired you myself to attend on Madam Helen.

BLANCH. Nay, I shall never forget it. But you were as frolicksome, then, as I, methinks. Dost remember the box on the ear I gave thee, Adam?

WINTER. Peace, peace, you pie! an you prate thus, I'll stop your mouth; I will, by St. Thomas!

BLANCH. An I be inclined to the contrary, I do not think you are able to stop it.

WINTER. Out, you baggage! thou hast more tricks than a kitten. Well, go thy ways. Sir Edward is at his study, and there thou wilt find him. Ah, Mistress Blanch! had you but seen me in the early part of Queen Elizabeth's reign!

BLANCH. How old art thou now, Adam?

WINTER. Four score, come Martlemas: and by our lady, I can run with a lapwing.

BLANCH. Can'st thou? Well said! Thou art a merry old man, and shalt have a kiss of me, on one condition.

WINTER. Shall I! odsbud, name it, and 'tis mine.

BLANCH. Then catch me.

Runs under his arm, and off, R.

WINTER. Pestilence on't! there was a time when my legs had served: but, to speak truth, I never thrust them now into my scarlet hose, that they do not remember me of two sticks of red sealing-wax. I was a clean-limb'd stripling, when I first stood behind Sir Marmaduke's arm chair, in the old oak eating-room. (*goes up stage*)

Enter WILFORD, L.

WILFORD. Every new act of Sir Edward's charity sets

me a thinking; and the more I think, the more I am puzzled. 'Tis strange that a man should be so ill at ease, who is continually doing good. At times, the wild glare of his eye is frightful; and, last night, when I was writing for him, in the library, I could not help fancying I was shut up with the devil. I would stake my life there's a secret, and I could almost give my life to unravel it. I must to him for my morning's employment. (*crossing to* R.)

WINTER. Ah! boy! Wilford! secretary! whither away, lad?

WILFORD. Mr. Winterton!—Aye, marry, this good old man has the clue, could I but coax him to give it me. A good morning to you, sir!

WINTER. Yea, and the like to thee, boy. Come, thou shalt have a cup of Canary from my corner cupboard, yonder.

WILFORD. Not a drop.

WINTER. Troth, I bear thee a good will, for thy honest old dead father's sake.

WILFORD. I do thankfully perceive it, sir. Your placing me in Sir Edward's family, some nine months ago, when my poor father died and left me friendless, will never out of my memory.

WINTER. Tut, boy, no merit of mine in assisting the friendless—'tis our duty, child. I could never abide to see honest industry chop-fallen. I love to have folks merry about me, to my heart.

WILFORD. I would you could instil some mirth into our good master, Sir Edward. You are an old domestic—the only one he brought with him, two years back, from Kent—and might venture to give his spirits a jog: he seems devoured with spleen and melancholy.

WINTER. You are a prying boy—go to! I have told thee, a score of times, I would not have thee curious about our worthy master's humour.

WILFORD. I should cease to pry, sir, would you but once (as I think you have more than once seemed inclined) gratify my much-raised curiosity.

WINTER. Well said, i'faith; I do not doubt thee. I warrant thou wouldst cease to enquire, when I had told thee all thou wouldst know. What, greenhorn, did'st

thou think to trap the old man? Go thy ways, boy! I have a head: old Adam Winterton can sift a subtle speech to the bottom.

WILFORD. Ah, good sir, you need not tell me that. Young as I am, I can admire that experience in another, which I want myself.

WINTER. There is something marvellous engaging in this young man. You have a world of promise, boy. Well, beware how you offend Sir Edward.

WILFORD. I would not willingly, for the world: he has been the kindest master to me; but whilst my fortunes ripen in the warmth of his goodness, the frozen gloom of his countenance chills me.

WINTER. Well, well, take heed how you prate on't. Out on these babbling boys! there is no keeping a secret with younkers in a family.

WILFORD. (*very eagerly*) What then there *is* a secret!—'Tis as I guessed, after all.

WINTER. Why, how now, hot-head?—Mercy on me! an this tinder-box boy do not make me shake with apprehension. Is it thus you take my frequent counsel?

WILFORD. Dear sir, 'tis your counsel which most I covet. Give me but that; admit me to your confidence; steer me with your advice, which I ever held excellent; and, with such a pilot, I may sail prosperously through a current which, otherwise, might wreck me.

WINTER. 'Tis melting to see how unfledged youth will shelter itself, like a chicken, under the wing of such a tough old cock as myself! Well, well, I'll think on't, boy.

WILFORD. The old answer. Yet, he softens apace: could I but clench him now. Faith, sir, 'tis a raw morning; and I care not if I taste the Canary your kindness offered.

WINTER. Aha! lad! say'st thou so? Just my modest humour when I was young. I ever refused my glass at first, but I came to it ere I had quitted my company. Here's the key of the corner cupboard, yonder. See you do not crack the bottle, you heedless goose, you!

WILFORD *goes off*, L., *and returns with bottle and glasses.*

Ha! fill it up. Od! it sparkles curiously. Here's to—

I prithee, tell me now, Wilford; didst ever in thy life see a waiting gentlewoman with a more inviting eye than the little Mrs. Blanch?

WILFORD. Here's Mistress Blanch. (*drinks*)

WINTER. Ah, wag! well, go thy ways! Well, when I was of thy age—odsbud! no matter; 'tis past, now; but here's the little Mistress Blanch. (*drinks*)

WILFORD. 'Tis thought, here, Sir Edward means to marry her lady, Madam Helen.

WINTER. Nay, I know not. She has long been enamoured of him, poor lady! when he was the gay, the gallant Sir Edward, of Kent. Ah, well! two years make a wond'rous change!

WILFORD. Yes, 'tis a good tough love, now-a-days, that will hold out a couple of twelvemonths.

WINTER. Away, I mean not so, you giddy pate! He is all honour; and as steady in his course as the sun: yet I wonder sometimes he can bear to look upon her.

WILFORD. Eh? why so? Did not he bring her, under his protection, to the Forest; since, 'tis said, she lost her relations?

WINTER. Hush, boy! on your life, do not name her uncle—I would say her relations.

WILFORD. Her uncle! wherefore? Where's the harm of having an uncle, dead or alive?

WINTER. Peace, peace! In that uncle lies the secret.

WILFORD. Indeed! how, good Adam Winterton? I prithee, how? Let us drink sir Edward's health.

WINTER. That I would, though 'twere a mile to the bottom. (*drinks*) Ha, it's cheering, i'faith!

WILFORD. And this uncle, you say——

WINTER. Of Madam Helen—ha! there lies the mischief.

WILFORD. What mischief can be in him? why, he is dead.

WINTER. Come nearer—see you prate not now, on your life. Our good master, Sir Edward, was arraigned on his account in open court.

WILFORD. Arraigned! how mean you?

WINTER. Alas, boy! tried. Tried for—nearer yet—his murder.

WILFORD. Mu—mu—murder!

WINTER. Why, what! why, Wilford! out, alas! the boy's passion will betray all! what, Wilford, I say.

WILFORD. You have curdled my blood!

WINTER. What, varlet, thou darest not think ill of our worthy master?

WILFORD. I—I am his secretary. Often alone with him at dead midnight, in his library. The candles in the sockets—and a man glaring upon me who has committed mur—ugh!

WINTER. Committed! Thou art a base lying knave, to say it; and while I wear a rapier, I'll——tush! Heaven help me! I forget I am fourscore. Well, well —hear me, pettish boy, hear me. Why, look now, thou dost not attend.

WILFORD. I—I mark; I mark.

WINTER. I tell thee, then, our good Sir Edward was beloved in Kent, where he had returned a year before from his travels; Madam Helen's uncle was hated by all the neighbourhood, rich and poor. A mere brute, dost mark me.

WILFORD. Like enough: but when brutes walk upon two legs, the law of the land, thank Heaven! will not suffer us to butcher them.

WINTER. Go to, you firebrand! Our good master laboured all he could, for many a month, to soothe his turbulence, but in vain. He picked a quarrel with Sir Edward in the public County Assembly; nay, the strong ruffian struck him down, and trampled on him. Think on that, Wilford—on our good master Sir Edward, whose great soul was nigh to burst with the indignity.

WILFORD. Well, but the end on't.

WINTER. Why, our young master took horse for his own house, determined, as it appeared, to send a challenge to this white-livered giant in the morning.

WILFORD. I see. He killed him in a duel. That's another kind of butchery, which the law allows not, true humanity shudders at, and false honour justifies.

WINTER. See, now, how you fly off! Sir Edward's revenge, boy, was baffled; for his antagonist was found dead in the street that night, killed, by some unknown assassins, on his return from the assembly.

WILFORD. Indeed! *unknown* assassins!

WINTER. Nay, 'tis plain our good Sir Edward had no hand in the wicked act, for he was tried, as I told you, at the next assize. Mercy on me! 'twas a crowded court; and how gentle and simple threw up their caps at his acquittal! Heaven be thanked! he was cleared beyond the shadow of doubt.

WILFORD. He was?—I breathe again. 'Twas a happy thing. 'Twas the only way left of cleansing him from a foul suspicion.

WINTER. Out, alas! lad, 'tis his principal grief. He is full of nice feeling, and high flown honour; and the thought of being tried for such a crime has given him his heart's wound. Poor gentleman! he has shunned the world ever since. He was once the life of all company ——but now!

SIR EDWARD MORTIMER. (*without*, R.) Winterton!

WINTER. Hark! some one calls. Out on thee! thou hast sunk my spirits into my heels. Who calls merry old Adam Winterton?

MORTIMER. (*without*) Adam Winterton! come hither to me.

WINTER. Nay, by our lady, 'tis Sir Edward himself! Pestilence on't! if I seem sad now, 'twill be noted. I come, good Sir Edward.

"When birds" (not a word on thy life!) "do carrol
on the bush,"
"With a hey ho nonny"——Mercy on me!

Exit, R.

WILFORD. My throat's parch'd, and my blood freezes. A quart of brandy couldn't moisten the one nor thaw the other. This accounts, then, for all. Poor, unhappy gentleman! This unravels all, from the first day of my service—when a deep groan made me run into the library, and I found him locking up his papers, in the iron chest, as pale as ashes. Eh!—What can be in that chest?—Perhaps some proof of——no, I shudder at the suggestion. 'Tis not possible one so good can be guilty of——I know not what to think—nor what to resolve. But curiosity is roused, and, come what may, I'll have an eye upon him.

Exit, R.

SCENE III.—*A Library.*

SIR EDWARD MORTIMER *discovered at a writing table*, C. ADAM WINTERTON *attending. Table, two chairs, a pistol on table, Iron Chest, with key in it*, L.

MORTIMER. 'Tis his first trespass, so we'll quit him, Adam:—
But caution him how he offend again.
As keeper of the forest, I should fine him.

WINTER. (R. C.) Nay that your worship should. He'll prove, ere long,
Mark but my words—a sturdy poacher. Well,
'Tis you know best.

MORTIMER. Well, well, no matter, Adam;
He has a wife, and child.

WINTER. Ah! bless your honour!

MORTIMER. They kill'd his dog?

WINTER. Aye, marry, sir:—a lurcher.
Black Martin Wincot, the groom keeper, shot him;
A perilous good aim.—I warrant me
The rogue has lived this year upon that lurcher.

MORTIMER. Poor wretch! Oh! well bethought; send Walter to me——
I would employ him; he must ride for me,
On business of much import.

WINTER. Lackaday!
That it should chance so! I have sent him forth,
To Winchester, to buy me flannel hose;
For winter's coming on. Good lack! that things
Should fall so crossly!

MORTIMER. Nay, nay, do not fret:
'Tis better that my business cool, good Adam,
Than thy old limbs.

WINTER. Ah! you've a kindly heart!

MORTIMER. Is Wilford waiting?

WINTER. Wilford! mercy on me!
I tremble now to hear his name. He is——
Here in the hall, sir.

MORTIMER. Send him in, I prithee.

WINTER. I shall, sir. Heaven bless you! heaven bless you! *Exit*, R.

MORTIMER. Good morning, good old heart! This honest soul (*rising*)
Would fain look cheery in my house's gloom,
And, like a gay and sturdy ever-green,
Smiles in the midst of blast and desolation,
Where all around him withers. Well, well—wither!
Perish this frail and fickle frame!—this clay,
That in its dross-like compound, doth contain
The mind's pure ore and essence.—Oh! that mind!
That mind of man! that god-like spring of action!
That source, whence learning, virtue, honour, flow!—
Which lifts us to the stars; which carries us
O'er the swoll'n waters of the angry deep,
As swallows skim the air.—That Fame's sole fountain!
That doth transmit a fair, and spotless name,
When the vile trunk is rotten:—Give me that!
Oh! give me but to live, in after-age,
Remember'd and unsullied!—Heaven and earth!
Let my pure flame of honour shine in story,
When I am cold in death—and the slow fire,
That wears my vitals now, will no more move me
Than 'twould a corpse within a monument.
(*a knock at the door of the library*, R.)
How now? Who's there! Come in.

Enter WILFORD, R. D.

Wilford! is't you? You were not wont to knock.
WILFORD. I fear'd I might surprise you, sir,
MORTIMER. Surprise me!
WILFORD. I mean—disturb you, sir:—yes—at your studies—
Disturb you at your studies.
MORTIMER. Very strange!
You were not used to be so cautious.
WILFORD. No—
I never used—but I—hum—I have learnt——
MORTIMER. Learnt!
WILFORD. Better manners, sir. I was quite raw,
When, in your bounty, you first sheltered me:
But, thanks to your great goodness, and the lessons

Of Mr. Winterton, I still improve,
And pick up something daily.

MORTIMER. Aye, indeed!
Winterton! No he dare not. Hark you, sir.
(stepping up to him)

WILFORD. Sir!

MORTIMER. *(retreating from him)* What am I about!—Oh, honour! honour!
Thy pile should be so uniform, displace
One atom of thee, and the slightest breath
Of a rude peasant makes thy owner tremble
For his whole building. Reach me, from the shelf,
The volume I was busied in, last night.

WILFORD. Last night, sir?

MORTIMER. Aye;—it treats of Alexander.

WILFORD. Oh, I remember, sir—of Macedon.
I made some extracts, by your order.
(goes to the bookcase)

MORTIMER. Books
(My only commerce, now,) will sometimes rouse me
Beyond my nature. I have been so warm'd,
So heated, by a well-turn'd rhapsody,
That I have seem'd the hero of the tale,
So glowingly described. Draw me a man
Struggling for fame, attaining, keeping it,
Dead ages since, and the historian
Decking his memory in polish'd phrase,
And I can follow him through every turn,
Grow wild in his exploits, myself himself,
Until the thick pulsation of my heart
Wakes me, to ponder on the thing I am.

WILFORD. *(L.—giving him the book)* To my poor thinking, sir, this Alexander
Would scarcely rouse a man to follow him.

MORTIMER. Indeed! why so lad? He is reckoned brave,
Wise, generous, learn'd, by older heads than thine.

WILFORD. I cannot tell, sir:—I have but a gleaning.—
He conquer'd all the world; but left unconquer'd
A world of his own passions—and they led him,
(It seems so there) on petty provocation,

Even to murder.

(MORTIMER *starts*—WILFORD *and he exchange looks —both confused*)

(*aside*) I have touch'd the string—

'Twas unawares—I cannot help it.

MORTIMER. (*attempting to recover himself*) Wilford—Wilford, I—you mistake the character—

I, mark you—he—death and eternal tortures!

(*dashes the book on the floor, and seizes* WILFORD)

Slave! I will crush thee! pulverise thy frame!

That no vile particle of prying nature

May—Ha, ha, ha!—I will not harm thee, boy ——

O, agony! (*rushes off*, R. *door*)

WILFORD. Is this the high-flown honour, and delicate feeling, old Winterton talked of, that cannot bear a glance at the trial?—Delicate! had I been born under a throttling planet, I had never survived this collaring. This may be guilt. If so—well, what have I to do with the knowledge on't—what *could* I do? cut off my benefactor! who gives me bread! who is respected for his virtues, pitied for his misfortunes, loved by his family, blessed by the poor! Pooh! he is innocent. This is his pride and shame. He was acquitted—thousands witnessed it—thousands rejoiced at it—thousands—eh? the key left in the iron chest! Circumstance and mystery tempt me at every turn. Ought I—no matter. These are no common incitements, and I submit to the impulse. It opens with a spring I see. I tremble in every joint. (*goes to the chest*)

Enter SIR EDWARD MORTIMER, R. *door*.

MORTIMER. I had forgot the key and—(*sees* WILFORD) ha! by hell!

(*snatches a pistol from the table, runs up to him, and holds it to his head.* WILFORD *on his knees, claps down the lid of the chest which he has just opened. After an apparent struggle of mind,* MORTIMER *throws the pistol from him*)

Begone!—Come back.—Come hither to me.

Mark me—I see thou dost at every turn—

And I have noted thee, too. Thou hast found

(I know not how) some clue to my disgrace:—

Aye, my disgrace—we must not mince it now—
Public dishonour!—trod on!—buffeted!
Then tried as the foul demon who had foil'd
My manly means of vengeance. Anguish gnaws me:
Mountains of shame are piled upon me!—Me,
Who have made Fame my idol. 'Twas enough!
But something must be superadded. You,—
A worm, a viper I have warm'd, must plant,
In venom'd sport, your sting into my wounds,
Too tender e'en for tenderness to touch,
And work me into madness. Thou wouldst question
My very—Slave!—my very innocence!
Ne'er doubted yet by judges or arraigners.
Wretch! you have wrung this from me. Be content;
I am sunk low enough.

WILFORD. (*returning the key*) Oh, sir! I ever
Honour'd and lov'd you. But I merit all.
My passions hurried me I know not whither.
Do with me as you please, my kind, wrong'd master!
Discard me—thrust me forth—nay, kill me——

MORTIMER. Kill you!

WILFORD. I know not what I say. I know but this,
That I would die to serve you.

Enter GREGORY, R. *door.*

GREGORY. Sir, your brother
Is just alighted at the gate.

MORTIMER. My brother!
He could not time it worse. Wilford, remember.
Come, shew me to him.

Exit with GREGORY, R. *door.*

WILFORD. Remember! I shall never while I live forget it: nay, I shall never while I live forgive myself. My knees knock together still, and the cold drops stand on my forehead like rain water on a penthouse.

Enter BARBARA, L. *door.*

BARBARA. Wilford!

WILFORD. Eh, Barbara! how camest thou here?

BARBARA. With my father, who waits below to see Sir Edward.

WILFORD. He——he is busied; he cannot see him now. He is with his brother.

BARBARA. Troth, I am sorry for it. My poor father's heart is bursting with gratitude, and he would fain ease it by pouring out his thanks to his benefactor. Oh, Wilford, yours is a happy lot to have such a master as Sir Edward.

WILFORD. Happy? Oh, yes—I-- I am very happy.

BARBARA. Mercy! has any ill befallen you?

WILFORD. No, nothing. 'Tis all my happiness. My happiness is like your father's gratitude, Barbara; and at times it goes near to choke me.

BARBARA. Nay, I'm sure there's more in this. Bless me, you look pale! I couldn't bear to see you ill or uneasy, Wilford.

WILFORD. Couldn't you, Barbara. Well, well, I shall be better presently. 'Tis nothing of import.

BARBARA. Trust me, I hope not.

WILFORD. Well, question me no more on't now, I beseech you, Barbara.

BARBARA. Believe me, I would not question you but to console you, Wilford. I would scorn to pry into any one's grief, much more yours, Wilford, to satisfy a busy curiosity; though I am told there are such in the world who would.

WILFORD. I—I am afraid there are, Barbara. But come, no more of this. 'Tis a passing cloud on my spirits, and will soon blow over.

BARBARA. Ah! could I govern your fortunes, foul weather should ne'er harm you.

WILFORD. Should not it, sweet! Kiss me. (*kisses her*) The lips of a woman are a sovereign cordial for melancholy.

Duet (*often omitted*)—WILFORD *and* BARBARA.

WILFORD. Sweet little Barbara, when you are advancing,
Sweet little Barbara, my cares you remove.
BARBARA. Poor little Barbara can feel her heart dancing,
When little Barbara is met by her love.
WILFORD. When I am grieved, love, oh, what would you
say?

BARBARA. Tattle to you, love,
And prattle to you, love,
And laugh your grief and care away.
WILFORD. Sweet little Barbara, &c.
BARBARA. Poor little Barbara, &c.

WILFORD. Yet, dearest Barbara, look all through the nation;
Care, soon or late, my love, is every man's lot.
BARBARA. Sorrow and melancholy, grief and vexation,
When we are young and jolly, soon is forgot.
WILFORD. When we grow old, love! then what will you say?
BARBARA. Tattle to you, love,
And prattle to you, love,
And laugh your care and grief away.
WILFORD. Sweet little Barbara, &c.
BARBARA. Poor little Barbara, &c.
Exeunt R. *door.*

END OF ACT FIRST.—(45 *minutes*)

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The New Forest.* (*Second grooves*)

Enter ARMSTRONG *and* ORSON, R. U. E.

ARMSTRONG. Go to; I tell thee, Orson (as I have told thee more than once) that thou art too sanguinary.

ORSON. And I tell you, Captain Armstrong—but always under favour, you being our leader—you are too humane.

ARMSTRONG. Humanity is scarcely counted a fault: if so, 'tis a fault on the right side.

ORSON. Umph! perhaps not with us. We are robbers.

ARMSTRONG. And why should robbers lack humanity? They who plunder most respect it as a virtue, and make a shew on't to gild their vices. Lawyers, physicians, placemen, all—all plunder and slay, but all pretend to humanity.

ORSON. They are regulars, and plunder by licence.

ARMSTRONG. Then let us quacks set the regulars a better example.

ORSON. This humanity, captain, is a high horse you are ever bestride upon. Some day, mark my word, he'll fling you.

ARMSTRONG. Cruelty is a more dangerous beast.—When the rider's thrown, his brains are kicked out, and no one pities him.

ORSON. Like enough; but your tough horseman, who ventures boldly, is never dismounted. When I am engaged in a desperate chase (as we are, captain,) I stick at nothing. I hate milk sops.

ARMSTRONG. And love mutiny. Take heed, Orson; I have before cautioned you not to glance at me.

ORSON. I say nothing: but if some escape to inform against us, whom we have robbed, 'tis none of my fault. Dead men tell no tales.

ARMSTRONG. Wretch! Speak that again, and you shall tell none. (*holds a carbine to his head*)

ORSON. Flesh away! I don't fear death.

ARMSTRONG. More shame to thee; for thou art unfit to meet it.

ORSON. I know my trade. I set powder, ball, and rope, at defiance.

ARMSTRONG. Brute! You mistake headstrong insensibility for courage. Do not mistake my horror of it for cowardice: for I, who shudder at cruelty, will fell your boldness to the earth, when I see you practise it. Submit.

ORSON. I do. I know not what 'tis, but I have told you, often, that there is something about you awes me. I cannot tell—I could kill twenty to your one.

ARMSTRONG. There 'tis.—Thou wouldst dart upon the weak, unguarded man, like a tiger. A ferocious animal, whether crawling or erect, ever slinks from fair opposition.

ORSON. My courage was never yet doubted, captain.

ARMSTRONG. Your nerves, fool. Thou art a mere machine. Could I but give it motion, I would take an oak from the forest, here, clap a flint into it for heart, and make as bold a fellow as thou art. Listen to my orders.

ORSON. I obey.

ARMSTRONG. Get thee to our den. (*crosses*, R.) Put on

thy disguise; then hie thee to the market-town for provision for our company. Here—here is part of the spoil we took yesternight: see you bring an honest account of what you lay out. (*giving money*)

ORSON. My honour!——

ARMSTRONG. Well, I do not doubt thee, here. Our profession is singular; its followers do not cheat one another. You will not be back till dusk. See you fall not on any poor straggling peasant, as you return.

ORSON. I would fain encounter the solitary man, who is sometimes wandering by night, about the forest. He is rich.

ARMSTRONG. Not for your life. 'Tis Sir Edward Mortimer, the head keeper. Touch him not; 'tis too near home. Besides, he is no object for plunder. I have watch'd him, at midnight, stealing from his lodge, to wander like one crazed. He is good, too, to the poor; and should walk unmolested by charity's charter. 'Twere pity that he who administers to necessity, all day, should be rifled by necessity at night. An thou shouldst meet him, I charge thee spare him.

ORSON. I must, if it be your order. This sparing doctrine will go nigh, at last, to starve all the thieves. When a man takes to the trade of a wolf, he should not go like a lamb to his business. *Exit*, R.

ARMSTRONG. This fellow is a downright villain: hardened and relentless. I have felt, in my penury, the world trample on me. It has driven me to take that, desperately, which wanting I should starve. Death! my spirit cannot brook to see a sleek knave walk negligently by his fellow in misery, and suffer him to rot, I will wrench that comfort from him which he will not bestow. But nature puts a bar: let him administer to my wants, and pass on: I have done with him.

Song.—ARMSTRONG.

When the robber his victim has noted,
When the freebooter darts on his prey,
Let humanity spare the devoted—
Let mercy forbid him to slay.

Since my hope is by penury blighted,
My sword must the traveller daunt;
I will snatch from the rich man, benighted,
The gold he denies to my want.

But the victim when once I have noted,
At my foot when I look on my prey,
Let humanity spare the devoted—
Let mercy forbid me to slay.

SCENE II.—*The Hall in Sir Edward Mortimer's Lodge.*

Enter FITZHARDING, L.

FITZ. Well, business must be minded; but he stays
A tedious time, methinks. You fellow!

To PETER *crossing the hall,* L. *to* R.

PETER. Sir!
FITZ. Where's Sir Tristful! where's Don Melancholy?
PETER. Who, sir?
FITZ. My brother, knave, Sir Edward Mortimer.
PETER. He was with you but now, sir.
FITZ. Sir, I thank you—
That's information. Louts and serving-men
Can never parley straight. Who brought in my luggage?
PETER. It was not I, sir.
FITZ. There, they never can!
Go to your master; pray him to dispatch
His household work; tell him I hate fat folios.
Plague! when I cross the country, here, to see him,
He leaves me ramm'd into an elbow chair,
With a huge, heavy book, that makes me nod,
Then tumbles on my toes. Tell him, dost hear,
Captain Fitzharding's company has tired me.
PETER. Whose company?
FITZ. My own, knave.
PETER. Sir, I shall.
Exit, L.
FITZ. A book to me's a sovereign narcotic,
A lump of opium, every line a dose.

Edward is all deep reading and black letter—
He shews it in his very chin. He speaks
Mere dictionary, and he pores on pages
That give plain men the headache. "Scarce and curious,"
Are baits his learning nibbles at. His brain
Is cramm'd with mouldy volumes, cramp and useless,
Like a librarian's lumber room. Poor fellow!
Grief will do much! well, some it drives to reading,
And some to drinking; 'twill do much! this trial——
A fool to fret so for't! his honour's clear.
Tut! I'm a soldier—know what honour is.
Had I been slander'd, and a fair court martial
Cleansed me from calumny, as white as snow,
I had ne'er moped, and fumed, and winced, and kicked,
But sat down heart whole. Plague upon't! this house
Appears the very cave of melancholy.
Nay, hold, I lie; here comes a petticoat.

Enter BLANCH, R., *crosses* L.

Od! a rare wench! This is the best edition
In Edward's whole collection. Here, come hither!
Let me peruse you.

BLANCH. Would you speak with me, sir;

FITZ. Aye, child. I'm going now to read you.

BLANCH. Read me!
You'll find me full of errors, sir.

FITZ. No matter.
Come nearer, child: I cannot see to read
At such a distance.

BLANCH. You had better, sir,
Put on your spectacles.

FITZ. Aye, there she has me!
A plague upon old Time! old scythe and hour glass
Has set his mark upon me. Harkye, child:
You do not know me. You and I must have
Better acquaintance.

BLANCH. O, I've heard of you.
You are Sir Edward's kinsman, sir—his brother.

FITZ. Aye—his half brother—by the mother's side—
His elder brother.

BLANCH. Yes sir, I see that.
FITZ. This gipsy's tongue is like her eye: I know not
Which is the sharpest. Tell me what's your name.
BLANCH. My name is Blanch, sir, born here, in the forest.
FITZ. Sbud! I must be a keeper in this forest.
Whither art going, sweet one?
BLANCH. Home, sir.
FITZ. Home!
Why is not this thy home?
BLANCH. No, sir; I live
Some half mile hence—with Madam Helen, sir.
I brought a letter from her, to Sir Edward.
FITZ. Odso, with Helen! So, with her! the object
Of my grave brother's groaning passion. Plague!
I would 'twere in the house. I do not like
Your rheumatic, October assignations,
Under an elm, by moonlight. This will end
In flannels and sciatica. My passion
Is not Arcadian. Tell me, pretty one,
Shall I walk with you, home?
BLANCH. No, sir, I thank you,
It would fatigue you, sadly.
FITZ. Fatigue me!
Oons! this wild forest filly, here, would make me
Grandfather to Methusaleh. Look here—
Here is a purse of money.
BLANCH. O, the father!
What will you give me any?
FITZ. Gold I find
The universal key; the *passe par tout.*
It will unlock a forest maiden's heart,
As easy as a politician's. Here;
Here are two pieces, rose-bud. Buy a top-knot;
Make thyself happy with them.
BLANCH. That I will.
The poor old woman, northward of the lodge,
Lies sick in bed. I'll take her this, poor soul,
To comfort her.
FITZ. Hold!—hey the devil!—hold.
This was not meant to comfort an *old* woman.
BLANCH. Why, wouldn't you relieve her, sir?

FITZ. Um?—yes:—
But—pshaw! pooh, prithee—there's a time for things.
Why tell me of her now,—of an old fool,—
Of comforting the aged, now?

BLANCH. I thought
That you might have a fellow feeling, sir.

FITZ. This little pastoral devil's laughing at me!
Oons! come and kiss me, jade. I am a soldier,
And Justice of Peace.

BLANCH. Then shame upon you!
Your double calling might have taught you better.
I see your drift now. Take your dirt again,
(*throws down the money*)
Good Captain-Justice!—Stoop for it,—and think
How an old soldier, and a justice, looks,
When he is picking up the bribes he offers,
To injure the helpless, the poor, and innocent,
He should protect. *Exit*, L

FITZ. I warrant me,
Could I but see my face, now, in a glass,
That I look wond'rous sheepish. I'm asham'd
To pick up the two pieces. Let them lie.
I would not wrong the innocent;—good reason;—
There be so few that are so:—she is honest;
I must make reparation. Odso! Wilford!

Enter WILFORD, L.

How fares it, boy?

WILFORD. I thank you, sir. I hope you have enjoy'd
Your health, these three months past, since last you honour'd us
With your good presence, at the lodge.

FITZ. Indifferent.
Some cramps and shooting pains, boy. I have dropt
Some cash here, but I am afraid to bend
To pick it up again, lest it should give me
An awkward twinge. Stoop for it, honest Wilford.
There's a good lad!

WILFORD. Right willingly, sir. (*picks up the money*, R.)

FITZ. So!

The soldier and the justice save their blushes.
Now, carry it, I prithee, at your leisure,
To an old gossip, near the lodge here—northward—
I've heard of her—she's bed-ridden, and sick.
You need not say who sent you.

WILFORD. I conceive.
'Tis private bounty; that's true charity.

FITZ. Nay, pish!—my charity!——

WILFORD. Nay, I could swear
'Tis not the first time you have offer'd this
In secret.

FITZ. Um!—why no; not quite the first.
But tell me, lad, how jogs the world here, eh?
In Rueful Castle. Harkye, Wilford, harkye!
Thou'rt a sly rogue! What, you could never tell me
Of Helen's waiting maid; the little cherry;—
Of——plague upon her name!—of——

WILFORD. Blanch, sir?

FITZ. Blanch;
That's it; the forest fairy. You and I
Must have some talk about her ——come hither.
(*they retire to the back*, L.)

Enter SIR EDWARD MORTIMER, R.

MORTIMER. Now for my brother, and—ha! Wilford with him!
That imp is made my scourge. They whisper too.
Oh! I had rather court the thunder-bolt,
To melt my bones, and pound me to a mass,
Than suffer this vile canker to corrode me.
Wilford!

WILFORD. Who calls?—eh!—'tis Sir Edward.
(*comes centre*)

FITZ. Mum!

MORTIMER. I seem to interrupt you.

WILFORD. (*earnestly*) No indeed.
No, on my life, sir:—we were only talking
Of——

FITZ. Hold your tongue. Oons! boy, you must not tell.

MORTIMER. Not!

FITZ. Not! no, to be sure:—why, 'tis a secret.

WILFORD. You shall know all, sir.—'Twas a trifle—nothing—
In faith, you shall know all.
FITZ. In faith, you lie.
Be satisfied, good Edward:—'tis a toy.—(*crosses, c.*)
But, of all men, I would not have thee know on't.
It is a tender subject.
MORTIMER. Aye, indeed.
FITZ. May not I have my secret? Oons! good brother,
What would you say, now, should a meddling knave
Busy his brains with matters, though but trivial,
Which concern you alone?
MORTIMER. I'd have him rot:
Die piecemeal; pine; moulder in misery.
Agent, and sacrifice to heaven's wrath,
When castigating plagues are hurl'd on man,
Stands lean, and lynx-eyed Curiosity,
Watching his neighbour's soul. Sleepless himself,
To banish sleep from others. Like a leech,
Sucking the blood-drops from a care-worn heart,
He gorges on't—then renders up his food,
To nourish Calumny, his foul-lung'd mate,
Who carries Rumour's trumpet, and whose breath,
Infecting the wide surface of the world,
Strikes pestilence and blight. Oh, fie on't! fie!
Whip me the curious wretch from pole to pole!
Who writhes in fire, and scorches all around him,
A victim making victims!
FITZ. By the mass,
'Twere a sound whipping that, from pole to pole!
From constable to constable might serve.
MORTIMER. Your pardon, brother;
I had forgot. Wilford, I've business for you.
Wait for me—aye—an hour after dinner,
Wait for me in the library.
WILFORD. The library!—
I sicken at the sound. (*aside*) Wait there for you—and—
Captain Fitzharding, sir?
MORTIMER. For me, alone.
WILFORD. Alone, sir!

MORTIMER. Yes,—begone!
WILFORD. I shall, sir—(*crosses*, R.) but,
If I have ever breath'd a syllable
That might displease you, may——
MORTIMER. Fool! breathe no more.
WILFORD. I'm dumb.
I'd rather step into a lion's den,
Than meet him in the library!—I go, sir. *Exit*, R.
FITZ. Brother, you are too harsh with that poor boy.
MORTIMER. Brother, a man must rule his family
In his own way.
FITZ. Well, well, well—don't be touchy.
I speak not to offend: I only speak
On a friend's privilege. The poor are men,
And have their feelings, brother.
MORTIMER. So have I!
FITZ. One of the best that we can shew, believe me,
Is mildness to a servant. Servants, brother,
Are born with fortune's yoke about their necks;
And that is galling in itself enough;
We should not goad them under it. The master
Should rather cheer them in their servitude,
With kindly words.
MORTIMER. Brother, your hand. You have a gentle nature—
May no mischance e'er ruffle it, my brother?
I've known thee from my infancy, old soldier;
And never did I know—I do not flatter—
A heart more stout, more cased with hardy manhood,
More full of milk within. Trust me, dear friend,
If admiration of thy charity
May argue charity in the admirer,
I am not destitute.
FITZ. You—I have seen you
Sometimes o'erflow with it.
MORTIMER. And what avails it?
Honour has been my theme, good will to man
My study. I have labour'd for a name
As white as mountain snow; dazzling, and speckless
Shame on't! 'tis blurred with blots! Fate, like mildew,

Ruins the virtuous harvest I would reap,
And all my crop is weeds. (*crosses*, L.)

FITZ. Why, how now, brother!
This is all spleen. You mope yourself too much,
In this dull forest here. Twenty blue devils
Are dancing jigs, and hornpipes, in your brains.
Fie, fie! be more a man. Come, come, rouse you!
I came on purpose, thirty miles from home,
To jog your spirits. Prithee, now be gay!
And, prithee, too, be kind to my young favourite!
To Wilford, there.

MORTIMER. Well, well; I hope I have been.

FITZ. No doubt, in actions:—but in words, and looks.—
A rugged look's a damper to a greenhorn.
I watched him, now, when you frown'd angerly;
And he betray'd——

MORTIMER. Betray'd!

FITZ. Ten thousand fears.

MORTIMER. Oh!

FITZ. The poor devil couldn't shew more scared
Had you e'en held a pistol to his head. (MORTIMER *starts*)
Why hey-day! what's the matter?

MORTIMER. Brother I——
Question me not; my nerves are aspen-like:
The slightest breath will shake 'em. Come, good brother.

FITZ. You'll promise to be gay?

MORTIMER. I'll do my best.

FITZ. Why that's well said! A man can do no more.
Od! I believe my rattling talk has given you
A stir already.

MORTIMER. That it has indeed! Come, brother!
Exeunt R.

SCENE III.—*Lady Helen's House.*

Enter HELEN, R., *and* SAMSON, L.

HELEN. Are you he that wish to enter in my service?

SAMSON. Yes, so please you, Madam Helen, for want of a better.

HELEN. Why, I have seen you in the forest—at Rawbold's cottage. He is your father, as I think.

SAMSON. Yes, so please you, madam, for want of a better.

HELEN. I fear me you may well say that. Your father, as I have heard, bears an ill name in the forest..

SAMSON. Alas! madam, he is obliged to bear it, for want of a better. We are all famish'd, madam: and the naked and hungry have seldom many friends to speak well of them.

HELEN. If I should hire thee, who will give thee a character?

SAMSON. My father, madam.

HELEN. Why, sirrah, he has none of his own.

SAMSON. The more fatherly in him, madam, to give his son what he has need of for himself. But a knave is often applied to, to vouch for a good servant's honesty. I will serve you as faithfully as your last footman; who, I have heard, ran away this morning,

HELEN. Truly, he did so.

SAMSON. I was told on't, some half-hour ago; and ran, hungrily, hither, to offer myself. So, please you, let not poverty stand in the way of my preferment.

HELEN. Should I entertain you, what could you do to make yourself useful?

SAMSON. Any thing. I can wire hares, snare partridges, shoot a buck, and smuggle brandy, for you, madam.

HELEN. Fie on you knave! 'Twere fitter to turn you over to the verderors of the forest, for punishment, than to encourage you in such practices.

SAMSON. I would practise any thing better, that might get me bread. I would scrape trenchers, fill buckets, and carry a message. What can a man do! He can't starve.

HELEN. Well, sirrah, to snatch thee from evil, I care not if I make trial of thee.

SAMSON. No! will you?

HELEN. Nineteen in twenty might question my prudence for this:—but, whatever loss I may suffer from thy roguery, the thought of having opened a path to lead a needy wanderer back to virtue will more than repay me.

SAMSON. Oh, bless you, lady! If I do not prove virtuous never trust in man more. I am overjoyed!

HELEN. Get thee to the kitchen. You will find a livery there will suit you.

SAMSON. A livery! oh, the father! Virtuous and a livery, all in a few seconds! Heaven bless you!

HELEN. Well, get you to your work.

SAMSON. I go, madam. If I break any thing to-day, beseech you let it go for nothing; for joy makes my hand tremble. Should you want me, please to cry Samson, and I am with you in a twinkling. Heaven bless you! Here's fortune! *Exit*, L.

HELEN. Blanch stays a tedious time. Heaven send Mortimer's health be not worse! He is sadly altered since we came to the forest. I dreamed last night, of the fire he saved me from; and I saw him, all fresh, in manly bloom, bearing me through the flames, even as it once happened.

Enter BLANCH, L.

HELEN. How now, wench! You have almost tired my patience.

BLANCH. And my own legs, madam. If the old footman had not made so much use of his, by running away, they might have spared mine.

HELEN. Inform me of Sir Edward Mortimer,
Hast seen him?

BLANCH. Yes, I have, madam.

HELEN. Say; tell me;
How look'd he? how's his health? is he in spirits?
What said he, Blanch? Will he be here to-day?

BLANCH. A little breath, madam, and I will answer all, duly.

HELEN. Oh! fie upon thee, wench!
These interrogatories should be answered
Quicker than breath can utter them.

BLANCH. That's impossible, lady.

HELEN. Thou would'st not say so hadst thou ever loved.
Love has a fleeter messenger than speech,
To tell love's meaning. His expresses post
Upon the orbs of vision, ere the tongue
Can shape them into words. A lover's look
Is his heart's Mercury. Oh, the eye's eloquence,

Twin-born with thought, outstrips the tardy voice,
Far swifter than the nimble lightning's flash
The sluggish thunder-peal that follows it.

BLANCH. I am not skill'd in eye-talking, madam. I have been used to let my discourse ride upon my tongue, and, I have been told, 'twill trot at a good round pace upon occasion.

HELEN. Then let it gallop, now, beseech you, wench,
And bring me news of Mortimer.

BLANCH. Then, madam, I saw Sir Edward in his library, and delivered your letter. He will be here either in the evening, or on the morrow: 'tis uncertain which—for his brother, Captain Fitzharding, is arrived, on a visit to him; but his letter may chance to specify further particulars.

HELEN. His letter! Has he written?—fie upon thee!
Why didst not give it me at once? Where is it?
Thou art turn'd dreamer, wench.—Come quickly.

BLANCH. You talked to me so much of reading eyes, madam, that I even forgot the letter. Here it is.

HELEN. Come to me, shortly, in my cabinet:
I'll read it there.—I am almost unfit
To open it. I never receive his letters
But my hand trembles. Well, I know 'tis silly;
And yet I cannot help it. I will ring;
Then come to me, good Blanch—not yet. My Mortimer,
Now for your letter! *Exit*, R.

BLANCH. I would they were wedded once, and all this trembling would be over. I am told your married lady's feelings are little roused in reading letters from a husband.

Enter SAMSON, *dressed in a livery*, L.

SAMSON. This sudden turn of fortune might puff some men up with pride. I have looked in the glass already:—and if ever man looked braver in a glass than I, I know nothing of finery. (*strutting across to* R.)

BLANCH. Hey-dey! who have we here?

SAMSON. Oh, lord! this is the maid.——I mean the waiting-woman. I warrant we shall be rare company, in a long winter's evening.

BLANCH. Why, who are you?

SAMSON. I'm your fellow-servant:—the new comer.

The last footman cast his skin in the pantry this morning, and I have crept into it.

BLANCH. Why, sure, it cannot be!—Now I look upon you again, you are Samson Rawbold—old Rawbold's son, of the forest here.

SAMSON. The same; I am not like some upstarts; when I am prosperous, I do not turn my back on my poor relations.

BLANCH. What, has my lady hired thee?

SAMSON. She has taken me, like a pad nag, upon trial.

BLANCH. I suspect you will play her a jade's trick, and stumble in your probation. You have been caught tripping, ere now.

SAMSON. An I do not give content, 'tis none of my fault. A man's qualities cannot come out all at once. I wish you would teach me a little how to lay a cloth.

BLANCH. You are well qualified for your office truly, not to know that.

SAMSON. To say truth, we had little practice that way at home. We stood not upon forms. We had sometimes no cloth for a dinner.

BLANCH. And, sometimes, no dinner for a cloth.

SAMSON. Just so. We had little order in our family.

BLANCH. Well, I will instruct you.

SAMSON. That's kind. I will be grateful. They tell me I have learnt nothing but wickedness yet: but I will instruct you in any thing I know, in return.

BLANCH. There I have no mind to become your scholar. But be steady in your service, and you may outlive your beggary, and grow into respect. *Exit*, R.

SAMSON. Nay, an riches rain upon me, respect will grow of course. I never knew a rich man yet who wanted followers to pull off their caps to him.

Song.—SAMSON.

A traveller stopped at a widow's gate;
She kept an inn, and he wanted to bait;—
But the landlady slighted her guest:
For when Nature was making an ugly race,
She certainly moulded this traveller's face
As a sample for the rest.

U. OF ILL. LIB.

The chamber-maid's sides they were ready to crack,
When she saw his queer nose, and the hump at his back;—
A hump isn't handsome, no doubt—
And though 'tis confess'd that the prejudice goes,
Very strongly, in favour of wearing a nose,
Yet a nose shouldn't look like a snout.

A bag full of gold on the table he laid—
'T had a wond'rous effect on the widow and maid!
And they quickly grew marvellous civil.
The money immediately alter'd the case;
They were charm'd with his hump, and his snout, and his face,
Though he still might have frighted the devil.

He paid like a prince—gave the widow a smack—
Then flop'd on his horse, at the door, like a sack;
While the landlady, touching the chink,
Cried—"Sir, should you travel this country again,
"I heartily hope that the sweetest of men
"Will stop at the widow's to drink."

Exit, L.

SCENE IV.—*The Library; key in* R. *door, and key in* L. *door.*

WILFORD, *discovered.*

WILFORD. I would Sir Edward were come! The dread of a fearful encounter is often as terrible as the encounter itself. Yet my encounters with him of late are no trifles. He's coming.—No. The old wainscot cracks, and frightens me out of my wits: and, I verily believe, the great folio dropt on my head, just now, from the shelf, on purpose to increase my terrors.

Enter SIR EDWARD MORTIMER, *at* R. *door of the library, which he locks after him.* WILFORD *turns round on hearing him shut it.*

WILFORD. What's that?—'Tis he himself! Mercy on me! he has locked the door!—What is going to become of me!

MORTIMER. Wilford!—Is no one in the picture gallery?

WILFORD. No—not a soul, sir—Not a human soul.—
None within hearing, if I were to call
Ever so loud.
MORTIMER. Lock yonder door. (*pointing to* L. *door*)
WILFORD. The door, sir!
MORTIMER. Do as I bid you.
WILFORD. What, sir! Lock——
(MORTIMER *waves with his hand, and brings down chair on which, he sits*)
I shall, sir. (*going to the* L. *door and locking it*)
MORTIMER. Wilford, approach me.—What am I to say
For aiming at your life!—Do you not scorn me,
Despise me for it?
WILFORD. I! oh, sir——
MORTIMER. You must.
For I am singled from the herd of men,
A vile, heart-broken wretch!
WILFORD. Indeed, indeed, sir,
You deeply wrong yourself. Your equal's love,
The poor man's prayer, the orphan's tear of gratitude
All follow you—and I—I owe you all!
I am most bound to bless you.
MORTIMER. Mark me, Wilford,—
I know the value of the orphan's tear,
The poor man's prayer, respect from the respected;
I feel to merit these, and to obtain them,
Is to taste here, below, that thrilling cordial
Which the remunerating angel draws,
From the eternal fountains of delight,
To pour on blessed souls, that enter heaven,
I feel this—I—How must my nature, then,
Revolt at him who seeks to stain his hand
In human blood?—and yet it seems, this day,
I sought your life.—Oh! I have suffer'd madness—
None know my tortures—pangs!—but I can end them:
End them as far as appertains to thee.—
I have resolved it.—Hell-born struggles tear me!
But I have ponder'd on't,—and I must trust thee.—
WILFORD. Your confidence shall not be——
MORTIMER. You must swear.
WILFORD. Swear, sir!—will nothing but an oath, then—

MORTIMER. (*rises and seizes* WILFORD'S *arm*) Listen.
May all the ills that wait on frail humanity
Be doubled on your head, if you disclose
My fatal secret! May your body turn
Most lazar-like and loathsome; and your mind
More loathsome than your body! May those fiends
Who strangle babes, for very wantonness,
Shrink back, and shudder at your monstrous crimes,
And shrinking, curse you! Palsies strike your youth!
And the sharp terrors of a guilty mind
Poison your aged days; while all your nights,
As on the earth you lay your houseless head,
Out-horror horror! May you quit the world
Abhor'd, self-hated, hopeless for the next,
Your life a burthen, and your death a fear!
WILFORD. For mercy's sake, forbear! you terrify me!
MORTIMER. Hope this may fall upon thee;—swear thou hopest it,
By every attribute which heaven, earth, hell,
Can lend, to bind, and strengthen conjuration,
If thou betray'st me.
WILFORD. Well I——(*hesitating*)
MORTIMER. No retreating!
WILFORD. (*after a pause*) I swear, by all the ties that bind a man,
Divine, or human,—never to divulge!
MORTIMER. Remember, you have sought this secret:—Yes,
Extorted it. I have not thrust it on you.
'Tis big with danger to you; and to me,
While I prepare to speak, torment unutterable.
Know, Wilford, that—damnation!
WILFORD. Dearest sir!
Collect yourself. This shakes you horribly.
You had this trembling, it is scarce a week,
At Madam Helen's.
MORTIMER. There it is.—Her uncle!
WILFORD. Her uncle!
MORTIMER. Him. She knows it not—none know it—
You are the first ordained to hear me say,
I am—his murderer.

WILFORD. O, heaven!

MORTIMER. His assassin.

WILFORD. What you that—mur—the murder—I am choked!

MORTIMER. Honour, thou blood-stain'd god! at whose red altar
Sit war and homicide, Oh, to what madness
Will insult drive thy votaries! By heaven!
In the world's range there does not breathe a man
Whose brutal nature I more strove to soothe,
With long forbearance, kindness, courtesy,
Than he who fell by me. But he disgraced me,
Stain'd me,—oh, death, and shame!—the world look'd on,
And saw this sinewy savage strike me down;
Rain blows upon me, drag me to and fro,
On the base earth, like carrion. Desperation,
In every fibre of my frame, cried vengeance!
I left the room which he had quitted. Chance,
(Curse on the chance!) while boiling with my wrongs,
Thrust me upon him, darkling, in the street:—
I stab'd him to the heart:—and my oppressor
Roll'd, lifeless, at my foot. (*crosses*, L.)

WILFORD. Oh! mercy on me!
How could this deed be cover'd!

MORTIMER. Would you think it?
E'en at the moment when I gave the blow,
Butcher'd a fellow-creature in the dark,
I had all good men's love. But my disgrace,
And my opponent's death, thus link'd with it,
Demanded notice of the magistracy.
They summon'd me, as friend would summon friend,
To acts of import and communication.
We met: and 'twas resolv'd to stifle rumour,
To put me on my trial. No accuser,
No evidence appeared, to urge it on.
'Twas meant to clear my fame.—How clear it, then?
How cover it? you say. Why, by a lie:
Guilt's offspring, and its guard. I taught this breast,
Which Truth once made her throne, to forge a lie;
This tongue to utter it.—Rounded a tale,

Smooth as a seraph's song from Satan's mouth;
So well compacted, that the o'er-throng'd court
Disturb'd cool Justice, in her judgment-seat,
By shouting "Innocence!" ere I had finished.
The court enlarged me; and the giddy rabble
Bore me, in triumph, home. (*crosses*, R.) Aye!—look upon me.—
I know thy sight aches at me.

WILFORD. Heaven forgive me!
I think I love you still:—but I am young;
I know not what to say:—it may be wrong.—
Indeed I pity you.

MORTIMER. I disdain all pity—
I ask no consolation. Idle boy!
Think'st thou that this compulsive confidence
Was given to move thy pity? Love of fame
(For still I cling to it) has urged me, thus,
To quash thy curious mischief in its birth.
Hurt honour, in an evil, cursed hour,
Drove me to murder—lying:—'twould again.
My honesty,—sweet peace of mind,—all, all!
Are barter'd for a name. I will maintain it.
Should slander whisper o'er my sepulchre,
And my soul's agency survive in death,
I could embody it with heaven's lightning,
And the hot shaft of my insulted spirit
Should strike the blaster of my memory
Dead in the churchyard. Boy, I would not kill thee:
Thy rashness and discernment threaten'd danger:
To check them there was no way left but this:—
Save one—your death:—you shall not be my victim.

WILFORD. My death! what take my life?—my life! to prop
This empty honour.

MORTIMER. Empty! grovelling fool!

WILFORD. I am your servant, sir: child of your bounty;
And know my obligation. I have been
Too curious, haply; 'tis the fault of youth.
I ne'er meant injury: if it would serve you,
I would lay down my life; I'd give it freely:—
Could you, then, have the heart to rob me of it?
You could not;—should not.

MORTIMER. How!
WILFORD. You dare not.
MORTIMER. Dare not!
WILFORD. Some hours ago you durst not. Passion moved you;
Reflection interposed, and held your arm.
But, should reflection prompt you to attempt it,
My innocence would give me strength to struggle,
And wrest the murderous weapon from your hand.
How would you look to find a peasant boy
Return the knife you levell'd at his heart;
And ask you which in heaven would shew the best,
A rich man's honour, or a poor man's honesty?
MORTIMER. 'Tis plain I dare not take your life. To spare it,
I have endanger'd mine. But dread my power;—
You know not its extent. Be warn'd in time:
Trifle not with my feelings. Listen, sir!
Myriads of engines, which my secret working
Can rouse to action, now encircle you.
I speak not vaguely. You have heard my principle;
Have heard, already, what it can effect:
Be cautious how you thwart it. Shun my brother;
Your ruin hangs upon a thread: Provoke me,
And it shall fall upon you. Dare to make
The slightest movement to awake my fears,
And the gaunt criminal, naked and stake-tied,
Left on the heath, to blister in the sun,
'Till lingering death shall end his agony,
Compared to thee, shall seem more enviable
Than cherubs to the damn'd.
WILFORD. O, misery!
Discard me, sir! I must be hateful to you.
Banish me hence. I will be mute as death;
But let me quit your service.
MORTIMER. Never.—Fool!
To buy this secret, you have sold yourself.
Your movements, eyes, and, most of all, your breath,
From this time forth, are fetter'd to my will.
You have said, truly: you are hateful to me:—
Yet you shall feel my bounty:—that shall flow,

And swell your fortunes; but my inmost soul
Will yearn with loathing, when—(*knock at* R. *door*)
hark! some one knocks!

(WILFORD *opens the door, and* WINTERTON *comes in*)

How now, Winterton?
Did you knock more than once? Speak—did you listen—
I mean, good Adam, did you wait?—Aye, wait
Long at the door, here?

WINTER. Bless your honour! no.
You are too good to let the old man wait.

MORTIMER. What, then, our talk, here—Wilford's here and mine—
Did not detain you at the door?—Ha!—did it?

WINTER. Not half a second.

MORTIMER. Oh!—well, what's the matter?

WINTER. Captain Fitzharding, sir, entreats your company.
I've placed another flaggon on the table.
Your worship knows it.—Number thirty-five:—
The supernaculum.

MORTIMER. Well, well—I come.
What, has he been alone?

WINTER. No—I've been with him.
Od! he's a merry man! and does so jest!
He calls me first of men, 'cause my name's Adam.
Well! 'tis exceeding pleasant, by St. Thomas!

MORTIMER. Come, Adam; I'll attend the captain.—Wilford,
What I have just now given you in charge,
Be sure to keep fast lock'd. I shall be angry,—
Be very angry if I find you careless.
Follow me, Adam.

Exit MORTIMER, R. *door*—WINTERTON *following.*

WILFORD. This house is no house for me. Fly I will, I am resolved:—but whither? His threats strike terror into me; and were I to reach the pole, I doubt whether I should elude his grasp. But to live here a slave—slave to his fears,—his jealousies!—Night's coming on. Darkness be my friend! for I will forth instantly. The thought of my innocence will cheer me, as I wander through the gloom. Oh! when guilty Ambition writhes upon its couch,

why should barefoot Integrity repine, though its sweet sleep be canopied with a ragged hovel. *Exit*, R. *door.*

SCENE V.—*The inside of an Abbey in ruins. Part of it converted into an habitation for robbers. Various entrances to their apartment, through the broken arches of the building, &c.*

Enter JUDITH, R., *meeting a* BOY *from* L.

JUDITH. Well, sirrah! have you been upon the scout? Are any of our gang returning?

BOY. No, Judith, not a soul.

JUDITH. The rogues tarry thus to fret me.

BOY. Why, indeed, Judith, the credit of your cookery is lost among thieves. They never come punctual to their meals.

JUDITH. No tidings of Orson yet, from the market town?

BOY. I have seen nothing of him.

JUDITH. Brat! thou dost never bring me good news.

BOY. Judith, you are ever so cross with me!

JUDITH. That wretch Orson slights my love of late. Hence, you hemp-seed, hence! Get to the broken porch of the abbey and watch. 'Tis all you are good for.

BOY. You know I am but young yet, Judith! but, with good instructions, I may be a robber, in time.

JUDITH. Away, you imp! you will never reach such preferment. (*whistle without*, L.) So! I hear some of our party. (*whistle again*, L.—*the* BOY *whistles in answer*)

JUDITH. Why must you keep your noise, sirrah?

BOY. Nay, Judith, 'tis one of the first steps we boys learn in the profession. I shall ne'er come to good, if you check me so. Huzza! here come two! (*rain heard*)

Enter two ROBBERS *through the broken part of the scene*, L. U. E.

JUDITH. So! you have found your road at last. A murrain light upon you! is it thus you keep your hours?

1ST ROBBER. What, hag, ever at this trade! Ever grumbling!

JUDITH. I have reason. I toil to no credit; I watch with no thanks. I trim up the table for your return, and

no one returns in due time to notice my industry. Your meat is scorched to cinders. Rogues, would it were poison for you!

2ND ROBBER. How the fury raves! Here, take my carbine; 'twas levell'd, some half hour since, at a traveller's head.

JUDITH. Hah, hah, hah! Rare! Didst shoot him?

1ST ROBBER. Shoot him? no. This devil in petticoats thinks no more of slaying a man, than killing a cockchafer. I never knew a woman turn to mischief, that she did not outdo a man, clean.

JUDITH. Did any of you meet Orson on your way?

1ST ROBBER. Aye, there the hand points. When that fellow is abroad, you are more savage than customary; and that is needless.

2ND ROBBER. None of our comrades come yet? They will be finely soaked.

1ST ROBBER. Aye, the rain pours like a spout upon the ruins of the old abbey wall here.

JUDITH. I'm glad on't. May it drench them, and breed agues! 'twill teach them to keep time.

1ST ROBBER. Peace! thou abominable railer. A man had better dwell in purgatory, than have thee in his habitation.—Peace, devil! or I'll make thee repent.

JUDITH. You! 'tis as much as thy life is worth to move my spleen.

1ST ROBBER. What, you will set Orson, your champion, upon me?

JUDITH. Coward! he should not disgrace himself with chastising thee.

1ST ROBBER. Death and thunder!——

JUDITH. Aye, attack a woman, do! it suits your hen-hearted valour. Assault a woman!

1ST ROBBER. Well—passion hurried me. But I have a respect for the soft sex, and am cool again. Come, Judith, be friends.—Nay, come, do; and I will give thee a farthingale, I took from a lawyer's widow.

JUDITH. Where is it?

1ST ROBBER. You shall have it.

JUDITH. Well—I—Hark!

2ND ROBBER. Soft! I think I hear the foot of a comrade.

The ROBBERS *enter through various parts of ruins, in groups.* ORSON, *with a basket on his back, as if returned from the market,* L. U. E.

1ST. ROBBER. See! hither comes Orson at last. He walks in like plenty, with provision on his shoulder.

JUDITH. O, Orson!—why didst tarry, Orson? I began to fear. Thou art cold and damp. Let me ring the wet from thy clothes. Oh! my heart leaps to see thee.

1ST. ROBBER. (L.) Mark how this she-bear hugs her bruin!

ORSON. Stand off! This hamper has been wearisome enough. I want not thee on my neck.

JUDITH. Villain! 'tis thus you ever use me. I can revenge:—I can—do not, dear Orson! do not treat me thus.

ORSON. Let a man be ever so sweet tempered, he will meet somewhat to sour it. I have been vexed to madness.

2ND. ROBBER. (R.) How now, Orson, what has vexed thee now?

ORSON. A prize has slipt through my fingers.

3RD ROBBER. (L. C.) Aye! marry, how?

ORSON. I met a straggling knave on foot, and the rogue resisted. He had the face to tell me that he was thrust on the world to seek his fortune; and that the little he had about him was his all. Plague on the provision at my back! I had no time to rifle him:—but I have spoiled him for fortune seeking, I warrant him.

ROBBER. How?

ORSON. Why I beat him to the ground. Whether he will e'er get up again the next passenger may discover.

JUDITH. Ha! ha! O, brave! That's my valiant Orson!

3RD ROBBER. Orson, you are ever disobeying our captain's order. You are too remorseless and bloody.

ORSON. Take heed, then, how you move my anger, by telling me on't. The affair is mine—I will answer to the consequence. (*whistle*, L.)

4TH ROBBER. I hear our captain's signal. Here he comes. Ha!—he is leading one who seems wounded.

Enter ARMSTRONG, *supporting* WILFORD, L. U. E.

ARMSTRONG. Gently, good fellow! come, keep a good heart!

WILFORD. You are very kind. I had breathed my last, but for your care. Whither have you led me?

1ST ROBBER. Where you will be well treated, youngster. You are now among as honourable a knot of men as ever cried "stand" to a traveller.

WILFORD. How: among robbers!

1ST ROBBER. Why so the law's cant calls us gentlemen who live at large.

WILFORD. So! for what am I reserved?

ARMSTRONG. Fear nothing. You are safe in this asylum. Judith, lead him in. See some of my linen ready, and look to his wound.

JUDITH. I do not like the office. You are ever at these tricks. 'Twill ruin us in the end. What have *we* to do with charity?

ARMSTRONG. Turbulent wretch! obey me.

JUDITH. Well, I shall. Come, fellow, since it must be so.

ARMSTRONG. Anon, I'll visit you myself, lad.

WILFORD. Heaven bless you! whate'er becomes of my life—and faith, I am almost weary on't—I am bound to your charity. Gently, I pray you—my wound pains.—Gently! *Exit, led out by* JUDITH, R.

ARMSTRONG. I would I knew which of you had done this.

1ST ROBBER. (L.) Why what's the matter, captain?

ARMSTRONG. Cruelty is the matter. Had not accident led me to the spot where he lay, yon poor boy had bled to death. I learned his story, partly, from him, on the way: and know how basely he has been handled by one of you. Well, time must discover him: for he, who had brutality enough to commit the action, can scarcely have courage enough to confess it.

ORSON. (R.) Courage, captain, is a quality, I take it, little wanted by any here. What signify words—I did it.

ARMSTRONG. I suspected thee, Orson. 'Tis scarce an hour since he, whom thou hast wounded, quitted the

service of Sir Edward Mortimer, in the forest, here; and enquiry will doubtless be made.

2ND ROBBER. (R. C.) Nay then we are all discovered.

ARMSTRONG. Now, mark what thou hast done. Thou hast endangered the safety of our party; thou hast broken my order ('tis not the first time, by many) in attacking a passenger:—and what passenger? One whose unhappy case should have claimed your pity. He told you he had displeased his master—left the house of comfort, and, with his scanty pittance, was wandering round the world to mend his fortune. Like a butcher, you struck the forlorn boy to the earth, and left him to languish in the forest. Would any of our brave comrades have done this?

ALL. None! None!

ARMSTRONG. Comrades, in this case, my voice is single. But if it have any weight, this brute, this Orson, shall be thrust from our community, which he has disgraced. Let it not be said, brothers, while want drives us to plunder, that wantonness prompts us to butchery.

ROBBERS. O brave captain! away with him!

ORSON. You had better ponder on't, ere you provoke me.

ARMSTRONG. Rascal! do you mutter threats. You cannot terrify us. Our calling teems with danger—we are not to be daunted by the treachery of an informer. We defy you. Go. You dare not hurt us. You dare not sacrifice so many brave, and gallant fellows, to your revenge, and proclaim yourself scoundrel. Begone.

ORSON. Well, if I must, I must (*crossing* L.) I was always a friend to you all: but if you are bent on turning me out——

ROBBERS. Aye, aye—away, away!

ORSON. Then the devil take you all! *Exit*, L.

ARMSTRONG. Come, comrades—think no more of this. Let us drown the choler we have felt in wine and revelry.

Finale, (*often omitted.*)

Jolly Friars tippled here,
Ere these abbey walls had crumbled;
Still the ruins boast good cheer,
Though long ago the cloysters tumbled.

The monks are gone:—
Well! well!
That's all one:—
Let's ring their knell.
Ding dong! ding dong! to the bald-pated monk!
He set the example,
We'll follow his sample,
And all go to bed most religiously drunk.
Peace to the good fat friar's soul!
Who, every day,
Did wet his clay,
In the deep capacious bowl.
Huzza! huzza! we'll drink, and we'll sing!
We'll laugh, and we'll quaff,
And make the welkin ring!

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Sir Edward Mortimer's Lodge. A table and two chairs,* R.; *sofa near* L.

MORTIMER *and* HELEN *discovered.*

HELEN. Sooth, you look better now; indeed you do.
MORTIMER. Thou'rt a sweet flatterer!
HELEN. Ne'er trust me, then,
If I do flatter. This is wilfulness.—
Thou wilt be sick, because thou wilt be sick.
I'll cure you of this fancy, Mortimer.
MORTIMER. And what would'st thou prescribe?
HELEN. I would distil
Each flower that lavish happiness produced,
Through the world's paradise, ere disobedience
Scatter'd the seeds of care; then mingle each,
In one huge cup of comfort for thee, love,
To chase away thy dulness. Thou shouldst wanton
Upon the wings of Time, and mock his flight,
As he sail'd with thee tow'rd eternity.
I'd have each hour, each minute of thy life,
A golden holiday; and should a cloud

O'ercast thee, be it light as gossamer,
That Helen might disperse it with her breath,
And talk thee into sunshine!

MORTIMER. Sweet, sweet Helen! *(they rise)*
Death, soften'd with thy voice, might dull his sting,
And steep his darts in balsam. Oh! my Helen,
These warnings which that grisly monarch sends,
Forerunners of his certain visitation,
Of late are frequent with me. It should seem
I was not meant to live long.

HELEN. Mortimer!
I could not talk so cruelly to you!
I would not pain you thus, for worlds!

MORTIMER. Nay, come;
I meant not this. I did not mean to say
There's danger now: but 'tis the privilege
Of sickness to be grave, and moralize
On that which sickness brings. I prithee, now,
Be comforted. Believe me, I shall mend.
I feel I shall already.

HELEN. Do you, Mortimer?
Do you, indeed, feel so?

MORTIMER. Indeed I do.

HELEN. I knew you would:—I said it. Did I not?
I see it in your looks, now, you are better.

MORTIMER. Scarce possible, so suddenly!

HELEN. Oh, yes;
There is no little movement of your face
But I can mark on the instant—'tis my study.
I have so gazed upon it, that, I think,
I can interrupt every turn it has,
And read your inmost soul.

MORTIMER. What?

HELEN. Mercy on me!
You change again.

MORTIMER. 'Twas nothing. Do not fear,
These little shocks, are usual.—'Twill not last.

HELEN. Would you could shake them off.

MORTIMER. I would I could!

HELEN. I prithee, now, endeavour.—This young man,
This boy—this Wilford—he has been ungrateful;

But do not let his baseness wear you thus.
Even let him go.

MORTIMER. I'll hunt him through the world!

HELEN. Why, look you there now! Pray be calm.

MORTIMER. Well, well;
I am too boisterous: 'tis my unhappiness
To seem most harsh where I would shew most kind.
The world has made me peevish. This same boy
Has somewhat moved me.

HELEN. He's beneath your care.
Seek him not now, to punish him. Poor wretch!
He carries that away, within his breast,
Which will embitter all his life to come,
And make him curse the knowledge on't.

MORTIMER. The knowledge!—
Has he then breathed——carries within his breast!
What does he know?

HELEN. His own ingratitude.

MORTIMER. Oh, very true.

HELEN. Then leave him to his conscience.
Believe me, love,
There is no earthly punishment so great,
To scourge an evil act, as man's own conscience,
To tell him he is guilty.

MORTIMER. 'Tis a hell!
I pray you talk no more on't.—I am weak—
I did not sleep last night. *(sits)*

HELEN. Would you sleep now?

MORTIMER. No, Helen, no. I tire thy patient sweetness.

HELEN. Tire me! nay, that you do not. Who comes here.

Enter WINTERTON, R.—SIR EDWARD *sits on a sofa.*

What, Winterton! how dost thou, old acquaintance?
How dost thou, Adam?

WINTERTON. Bless your goodness, well.
Is my good master better?

HELEN. Somewhat, Adam.

WINTERTON. Now, by our lady, I rejoice to hear it.
I have a message——

HELEN. O, no business now!

WINTERTON. Nay, so I said. Quoth I, "His honour's sick;

Perilous sick!" but the rogue press'd, and press'd;
I could refuse no longer.

HELEN. Who has thus importuned you?

WINTERTON. To say the truth, a most ill-favor'd varlet.
But he will speak to none but to his worship.
I think 'tis forest business.

MORTIMER. O, not now:
Another time—to-morrow—when he will.
I am unfit.—They teaze me!

WINTERTON. Even as you please, your worship. I should think,
From what he dropt, he can give some account
Of the poor boy.

MORTIMER. Of Wilford! (*crosses to* WINTERTON)

WINTERTON. Troth, I think so.
The knave is shy; but Adam has a head.

MORTIMER. Quick; send him hither on the instant! Haste!
Fly, Adam, fly.

WINTERTON. Well now, it glads my heart
To hear you speak so briskly.

MORTIMER. Well, dispatch!

WINTERTON. I go. Heaven bless you both! Heaven send you well,
And merry days may come again. *Exit*, R.

HELEN. I fear this business may distract you, Mortimer:
I would you would defer it till to-morrow.

MORTIMER. Not so, sweet. Do not fear. I prithee, now,
Let me have way in this. Retire awhile.
Anon I'll come to thee.

HELEN. Pray now, be careful.
I dread those agitations. Pray, keep calm.
Now do not tarry long. Adieu! my Mortimer!

MORTIMER. Farewell, awhile, sweet!

HELEN. Since it must be so—Farewell! *Exit* HELEN, L.

MORTIMER. Dear, simple innocence! thy words of comfort
Pour oil upon my fires. Methought her eye,
When first she spake of conscience, shot a glance
Like her dead uncle on me. Well, for Wilford!
That slave can play the Parthian with my fame,
And wound it while he flies. Bring him before me,
Place me the runagate within my gripe,

And I will plant my honour on its base,
Firmer than adamant, though hell and death
Should moat the work with blood! Oh, how will sin
Engender sin! Throw guilt upon the soul,
And, like a rock dash'd on the troubled lake,
'Twill form its circles, round succeeding round,
Each wider than the——

Enter ORSON, R.

How now! What's your business?

ORSON. Part with your office in the forest: part
Concerns yourself in private.

MORTIMER. How myself?

ORSON. Touching a servant of your house; a lad,
Whose heels, I find, were nimbler than his duty.

MORTIMER. Speak; what of him? Quick—Know you where he is?
Canst bring me to him?

ORSON. To the very spot.

MORTIMER. Do it.

ORSON. Nay, softly.

MORTIMER. I'll reward you—amply—
Ensure your fortunes.

ORSON. First ensure my neck.
'Twill do me little good else. I've no heirs;
And, when I die, 'tis like the law will bury me,
At its own charge.

MORTIMER. Be brief, and to your purpose.

ORSON. Then, to the business which concerns your office,
Here, in the forest.

MORTIMER. Nay, of that anon.
First of my servant.

ORSON. Well, even as you please.
'Tis no rare thing—Let public duty wait,
Till private interests are settled. But
My story is a chain. Take all together,
'Twill not unlink.

MORTIMER. Be quick, then. While we talk,
This slave escapes me.

ORSON. Little fear of that.
He's in no plight to journey far to-day.

MORTIMER. Where is he hid?
ORSON. Hard by; with robbers.
MORTIMER. Robbers!—
Well, I'm glad on't. 'Twill suit my purpose best.
(*aloud*) What, has he turn'd to plunder?
ORSON. No; not so.
Plunder has turn'd to him. He was knock'd down,
Last night, here in the forest, flat and sprawling;
And the milk-hearted captain of our gang
Has shelter'd him.
MORTIMER. It seems, then, thou'rt a thief?
ORSON. I serv'd in the profession: But, last night,
The scurvy rogues cashier'd me. 'Twas a plot,
To ruin a poor fellow in his calling,
And take away my means of getting bread.
I come here, in revenge. I'll hang my comrades,
In clusters, on the forest oaks, like acorns.
MORTIMER. Where lies their haunt?
ORSON. Give me your honour, first——
MORTIMER. I pledge it, for your safety.
ORSON. Send your officers
To the old Abbey ruins; you will find
As bold a gang as e'er infested woods,
And fatten'd upon pillage.
MORTIMER. What, so near me! (*crosses*, R.)
In some few minutes, then, he's mine! Ho! Winterton!
Now for his lurking place! Hope dawns again.
Remain you here; I may have work for you. (*to* ORSON)
O! I will weave a web so intricate,
For this base insect! so entangle him!—
Why, Winterton! Thou jewel, reputation!
Let me secure thee, bright and spotless, now;
And this weak, care-worn body's dissolution,
Will cheaply pay the purchase! Winterton!
Exit, R.

ORSON. There may be danger in my stay here. I will e'en slink off, in the confusion I have raised. I value not the reward. I hang my comrades, and that shall content me.

He glances round, sees a silver candlestick, which he conceals, and goes off, R.

Scene II.—*A Hall in the Lodge.*

Enter Fitzharding, l.

Fitz. The hue and cry is up! I am half tempted
To wish the game too nimble for the dogs,
That hunt him at the heels. Wilford dishonest?
I'll mix with none,
In future, but the ugly: honest men,
Who can outgrin a Griffin; or the head
Carved on the prow of the good ship the Gorgon.
I'm for carbuncled, weather-beaten faces,
That frightened little children, and might serve
For knockers to hall gates.—

Enter Samson, r.

Now—who are you?

Samson. Head serving-man to madam Helen, sir.

Fitz. Well, I may talk to thee; for thou dost answer
To the description of the sort of men
I have resolved to live with.

Samson. I am proud, sir,
To find I have your countenance.

Fitz. Canst tell me
The news of Wilford?

Samson. He is turn'd a rogue, sir.
An errant knave, sir. 'Tis a rare thing, now,
To find an honest servant:—we are scarce.

Fitz. Where lies the abbey where they go to seek him?
Dost know it?

Samson. Marry, do I; in the dark.
I have stood near it, many a time, in winter,
To watch the hares, by moonlight.

Fitz. A cold pastime!

Samson. Ay, sir; 'twas killing work. I've left it off.

Fitz. Think you they will be back soon?

Samson. On the instant:
It is hard by, sir.—Hark I hear their horses!
They are return'd, I warrant.

Fitz. Run you, fellow,— (Samson *crosses*, l.)
If Wilford's taken, send him here to me.

SAMSON. Why he's a rogue, sir. Would your worship stoop
To parley with a rogue!

FITZ. Friend, I will stoop
To prop a sinking man, that's call'd a rogue,
And count him innocent, 'till he's found guilty.
I learn'd it from our English laws. Till detection comes,
I side with the accused.

SAMSON. Would I had known
Your worship sooner. You're a friend, indeed!
All undiscover'd rogues are bound to pray for you:
So, heaven bless you!

FITZ. Well, well—bustle; stir:—
Do as I bid thee.

SAMSON. Aye sir.—I shall lean
Upon your worship in any time of need.—
Heaven reward you!—Here's a friend to make!
Exit, L.

FITZ. I have a kind of movement, still, for Wilford,
I cannot conquer. What can be this charge
Sir Edward brings against him?—So! Here he comes!

Enter WILFORD, L.

WILFORD. I am inform'd it is your pleasure, sir,
To speak with me.

FITZ. Aye, Wilford. I am sorry—
Faith, very sorry,—you and I meet thus.
How could you quit my brother thus abruptly?

WILFORD. I was unfit to serve him, sir.

FITZ. Unfit!

WILFORD. I was unhappy, sir. I fled a house
Where certain misery awaited me,
While I was doom'd to dwell in't.

FITZ. Misery!
What was this certain misery?

WILFORD. Your pardon,—
I never will divulge.

FITZ. Harkye, young man. This smacks of mystery;
And now looks foully. Truth and Innocence,

Walk round the world in native nakedness;
But Guilt is cloak'd.

WILFORD. Whate'er the prejudice
My conduct conjures up, I must submit.

FITZ. 'Twere better now you conjured up your friends:
For I must tell you——No, there is no need.
You learn'd it, doubtless, on the way, and know
The danger you, now, stand in.

WILFORD. Danger, sir!
What? How? I have learn'd nothing, sir: my guides
Dragg'd me in silence hither.

FITZ. Then 'tis fit
I put you on your guard. It grieves me, Wilford,
To say there is a heavy charge against you,
Which, as I gather, may affect your life.

WILFORD. Mine!—oh, good heaven!

FITZ. Pray be calm:—for, soon,
Here, in the face of all his family,
My brother will accuse you.

WILFORD. He!—what, he!
He accuse me! oh, monstrous! Oh, look down
You who can read men's hearts!—A charge against me!
Ha, ha! I'm innocent! I'm innocent! (*much agitated*)

FITZ. Collect your firmness. You will need it all.

WILFORD. I shall, indeed! I pray you tell me, sir,
What is the charge?

FITZ. I do not know its purport.
I would not hear on't: for on my voice rests
The issue of this business;—and a judge
Should come unbiass'd to his office. Wilford,
Were twenty brothers waiting my award,
You should have even, and impartial justice.
Farewell! and may you prosper! *Exit*, R.

WILFORD. Let me recall my actions.—My breast is unclogged with crime. Then, why should I fear? Let him inflict his menaces upon, me in secret; he shall nor, cannot, touch my good name.

Enter BARBARA, L.

BARBARA. Oh, Wilford! (*falls on his neck*)

WILFORD. Barbara! at such a time, too!

BARBARA. To be brought back, thus, Wilford! and to go away without seeing me! without thinking of me!

WILFORD. It was not so—I was hastening to your cottage, Barbara, when a ruffian, in the forest, encountered and wounded me.

BARBARA. Wounded you!

WILFORD. Aye, Barbara. When I was dragged hither, the whole troop escaped, or they had vouched for the truth on't.

BARBARA. Bethink you, Wilford—the time is short: I know your heart is good.

BARBARA. If, in a hasty moment, you have done ought to wrong Sir Edward, throw yourself on his mercy,—sue for pardon.

WILFORD. For pardon!—I shall go mad! Pardon! I am innocent.—Heaven knows I am innocent.

BARBARA. Heaven be thanked!—The family is all summoned. O, Wilford! my spirits sink within me.

WILFORD. (*aside*) I am, now, but a sorry comforter. Be of good cheer. I go armed in honesty, Barbara. This charge is to be open in the eye of the world, and of the law; then, wherefore, should I fear. I am native of a happy soil, where Justice guards equally the life of its poorest and richest inhabitant.

Exit WILFORD *and* BARBARA, R.

SCENE III.—*An Apartment in the Lodge. Table and two arm chairs;—trunk on table,* L.

FIZTHARDING *seated,* C., WILFORD, R.; GREGORY *and* DOMESTICS *discovered,* R. *and* L.

FITZ. Is not Sir Edward coming? Oh! he's here!

Enter SIR EDWARD MORTIMER, R.

Now, brother—You look pale,
And faint with sickness. Here's a chair.

MORTIMER. (*sitting,* L. C.) No matter.—To our business, brother. Wilford!
You may well guess the struggle I endure
To place you here the mark of accusation.

I gave you ample warning: Caution'd you,
When many might have scourged: and, even now,
While I stand here to crush you,—aye, to crush you,
My heart bleeds drops of pity for your youth,
Whose rashness plucks the red destruction down,
And pulls the bolt upon you.

WILFORD. You know best
The movements of your heart, sir. Man is blind,
And cannot read them: but there is a Judge,
To whose all-seeing eye our inmost thoughts
Lie open. Think to him you now appeal.—
Omniscience keeps heaven's register;
And, soon or late, when Time unfolds the book,
Our trembling souls must answer to the record,
And meet their due reward or punishment.

FITZ. Now, to the point, I pray you.

MORTIMER. Thus it is, then,
I do suspect—By heaven, the story lingers,
Like poison on my tongue,—but he will force it——

FITZ. What is it you suspect?

MORTIMER. That he has robb'd me.

WILFORD. Robb'd! I! O, horrible!

FITZ. (*to* WILFORD) Not yet—not yet.
Pray tell me, brother, how ground you this suspicion?

MORTIMER. Briefly, thus:—
You may have noticed, in my library,
A chest; (WILFORD *starts*)—You see he changes at the word.

WILFORD. (*aside*) And well I may!

MORTIMER. Where I have told you, brother,
The writings which concern our family,
With jewels, cash, and other articles,
Of no mean value, were deposited.

FITZ. You oftentimes have said so.

MORTIMER. Yesterday,
Chance call'd me, suddenly, away; I left
The key in't—but as suddenly return'd;
And found this Wilford, this young man, whose state,
Whose orphan state, met pity in my house,
'Till pity grew to friendship,—him I found,
Fix'd o'er the chest, upon his knees, intent,

As, now, I think, on plunder. Confusion
Shook his young joints, as he let fall the lid,
And gave me back the key.

FITZ. Did you not search
Your papers on the instant?

MORTIMER. No:—for, first,
(Habit so long had fix'd my confidence)
I deem'd it boyish curiosity;—
But told him this would meet my further question:
And, at that moment, came a servant in,
To say you were arrived. He must have mark'd
Our mix'd emotion.

FITZ. Is that servant here?

GREGORY. (*comes down* L.) 'Twas I, sir.

MORTIMER. Was it you? Well, saw you ought
To challenge your attention?

GREGORY. Sir, I did.—
Wilford was pale and trembling; and our master
Gave him a look as if 'twould pierce him through;
And cried, "Remember."—Then he trembled more,
And we both quitted him.

MORTIMER. When first we met,
You found me somewhat ruffled.

FITZ. 'Tis most true.

MORTIMER. But somewhat more when, afterwards, I saw,
Wilford conversing with you;—like a snake,
Sun'd by your looks, and basking in your favour.
I bade him quit the room, with indignation,
And wait my coming in the library.

FITZ. I witness'd that, with wonder.

MORTIMER. O, good brother!
You little thought, while you so gently school'd me,
In the full flow of your benevolence,
For my harsh bearing tow'rd him, on what ground
That harshness rested. I had made my search,
In the brief interval of absence from you,
And found my property had vanish'd.

FITZ. (C.) Well—
You met him in the library?

MORTIMER. (L. C.) O, never
Can he forget that solemn interview.

WILFORD. (R.) Aye, speak to that:—it was a solemn interview.

MORTIMER. Observe, he does acknowledge that we met;
Guilt was my theme:—he cannot, now deny it.

WILFORD. It was a theme of——No! (*checking himself*)

MORTIMER. He pleaded innocence:
While every word he spake belied his features,
And mock'd his protestation.

FITZ. What said you to him?

MORTIMER. "Regulate your life,
"In future, better. I, now, spare your youth;
"But dare not to proceed. All I exact,
"('Tis a soft penance)—that you tarry here;
"My eye your guard, my house your gentle prison,
"My bounty be your chains. Attempt not flight;
"Flight ripens all my doubt to certainty,
"And justice to the world unlocks my tongue."—
He fled, and I arraign him.

FITZ. Trust me, brother,
This charge is staggering. Yet accidents
Sometimes combine to cast a shade of doubt
Upon the innocent. May it be so here!
Here is his trunk: 'twas brought here at my order.
'Tis fit it be inspected.

WILFORD. Here's the key—
(GREGORY *goes for key and gives it to* FITZHARDING)
E'en take it, freely.—You'll find little there
I value; save a locket, which my mother
Gave me upon her death-bed; and she added
Her blessing to't. Perhaps, her spirit now
Is grieving for my injuries.

FITZ. (*goes to trunk*) How now? What's there?
The very watch Sir Edward's father wore!
And, here, our mother's jewels!

WILFORD. I am innocent. Just heaven hear me!

FITZ. Make it appear so.—But look there; look there!
(*points to the trunk*)

WILFORD. Do you not know——

MORTIMER. What?

WILFORD. 'Tis no matter, sir.
But I could swear——

MORTIMER. (*rises*) Nay, Wilford, pause awhile.

Reflect that oaths are sacred. Weigh the force
Of these asservations. Mark it well.
I swear by all the ties that bind a man,
Divine or human ! Think on that, and shudder.

WILFORD. (*aside*) The very words I utter'd! I am tongue-tied.

FITZ. Wilford, if there be aught that you can urge,
To clear yourself, advance it.

WILFORD. O, I could !
I could say much, but must not.—No, I will not.
Do as you please. I have no friend—no witness,
Save my accuser. Did he not—pray ask him ?
Did he not menace, in his pride of power,
To blast my name, and crush my innocence ?

FITZ. What do you answer, sir ?

MORTIMER. I answer—No.—
More were superfluous, when a criminal
Opposes empty volubility
To circumstantial charge A stedfast brow
Repels not fact, nor can invalidate
These dumb, but damning, witnesses, before him.
(*pointing to the trunk*)

WILFORD. By the just Power that rules us, I am ignorant
How they came there !—but 'tis my firm belief,
You placed them there, to sink me.

FITZ. O, too much !
You steel men's hearts against you! Death and shame!
It rouses honest choler. Call the officers.—
He shall meet punishment. (SERVANTS *going*, R.)

MORTIMER. (*sits*, C.) Hold ! pray you, hold.
Justice has, thus far, struggled with my pity,
To do an act of duty to the world.
I would unmask a hypocrite; lay bare
The front of guilt, that men may see and shun it:
'Tis done—And I will, now, proceed no further.
I would not hurt the serpent, but to make
The serpent hurtless. He has lost his sting:
Let him depart, and freely.

FITZ. Look ye, brother, this act
Is so begrimed with black, ungrateful malice,
That I insist on justice. Fly, knaves ! run,

And let him be secured. (*Exeunt* SERVANTS, L.) You tarry here. (*to* WILFORD)

MORTIMER. I will not have it thus.

FITZ. You must—You shall—
'Tis weak else. Oons! I trust I have as much
Of good, straight-forward pity, as may serve:—
But, to turn dove—to sit still, and be peck'd at,—
It is too tame. His insolence tops all!
Does not this rouse you, too?—Look on these jewels.
Look at this picture.—'Twas our mother's: stay,
Let me inspect this nearer. What are here?
Parchments—— (*inspecting the trunk*)

MORTIMER. Oh, look no further—they are deeds,
Which, in his haste, no doubt he crowded there,
Not knowing what—to look o'er at his leisure—
Family deeds—they all were in my chest.

WILFORD. Oh, 'tis deep laid!—these, too, to give a colour! (*aside*)

FITZ. What have we here? Here is a paper
Of curious enfolding—slipt, as 'twere
By chance, within another. This may be
Of note upon his trial. (*a dagger falls*) What's this drops?
A knife, it seems!

MORTIMER. What! (*starting*)

FITZ. Marks of blood upon it.

MORTIMER. Touch it not. Throw it back!—bury it—sink it! (*runs down*, R.)
Oh, carelessness and haste! Give me that paper.
Darkness and hell!—Give me the paper.
(MORTIMER *attempts to snatch it*—WILFORD *runs between the two brothers, falls on his knees, and prevents him, holding* FITZHARDING)

WILFORD. (*rapidly*) No.
I see—I see—preserve it. You are judge!
My innocence, my life, rests on it!

MORTIMER. Devils!
Foil me at my own game!—Fate!—ha, ha, ha!
Sport, Lucifer!—He struck me——
(MORTIMER *faints and is falling*—WILFORD *runs and catches him*)

WILFORD. (*in centre*) I'll support him.—
Read! read! read!
FITZ. What is this?—My mind misgives me!
It is my brother's hand! (*reads*) "This paper to be
destroyed before my death!" What can this mean?
"Narrative of my murder of——" Oh, great heav'n!
"If by some chance my guilt should be disclosed,
"May this contribute to redeem the wreck
"Of my lost honour!"—I am horror-struck!
WILFORD. Plain, plain!—stay he revives.
MORTIMER. (*reviving*) What has been—soft!
I have been wand'ring with the damn'd, sure.—
Brother!—
And—aye—'tis Wilford! Oh! thought flashes on me
Like lightning. I am brain-scorch'd. Give me leave.
I will speak—Soon I will——a little yet—
Come hither, boy—wrong'd boy! Oh, Wilford, Wilford! (*bursts into tears, and falls on* WILFORD'S *neck*)
WILF. Be firm, sir; pray be firm! my heart bleeds for you;
Warms for you! Oh! all your former charity
To your poor boy, is in my mind.—Still, still,
I see my benefactor!
MORTIMER. Well, I will—
I will be firm. One struggle, and 'tis over.
I have most foully wrong'd you! Ere I die—
And I feel death-struck—let me haste to make
Atonement.—Brother, note. The jewels,—
Yes, and that paper—heaven and accident
Ordain'd it so!—were placed—curse on my flesh,
To tremble thus!—were placed there by my hand.
FITZ. O, mercy on me!
MORTIMER More. I fear'd this boy;
He knew my secret; and I blacken'd him,
That should he e'er divulge the fatal story,
His word might meet no credit. Infamy
Will brand my mem'ry for't: Posterity
Whose breath I made my god, will keep my shame
Green in her damning record. Oh! I had—
I had a heart o'erflowing with good thoughts
For all mankind! One fatal, fatal turn,
Has poison'd all! Where is my honour, now?
To die!—To have my ashes trampled on,

By the proud foot of scorn! Polluted! Hell—
Who dares to mock my guilt? Is't you—or you?—
Rack me that grinning fiend! Damnation!
Who spits upon my grave? I'll stab again—
I'll—Oh! (*falls* C.)

FITZ. This rives my heart in twain. Why, brother, brother! His looks are ghastly.

Enter HELEN, L.

HELEN. Where is he? Ill! and on the ground! Oh, Mortimer!
Oh, heaven! my Mortimer. O, raise him.—Gently, Speak to me, love. He cannot!

MORTIMER. Helen—'Twas I that——kill——

(*slow music—he struggles to speak, but appears unable; he kisses her hand and dies,* C. *; she faints upon the bod*

Curtain.

Costumes—(TIME OF CHARLES THE FIRST.)

SIR EDWARD.—Black velvet doublet, trunks and cloak, slashed with red, red tights, black shoes, long hair, beard and moustache, point lace collar and cuffs, sword.

FITZHARDING.—Scarlet doublet, trunks and cloak, slashed with yellow and gold lace, buff boots, cane, sword, iron-grey ringlet wig, moustache, and small beard, brown beaver hat and red feather, ruff.

WILFORD.—Neat grey doublet or short tunic, and trunks trimmed with black, grey tights and shoes, round cap.

ADAM.—Yellow shape trimmed with red, red tights and buff shoes, ruff.

SAMSON.—*First Dress:* Dark and worn short tunic and trunks, ...ched grey legs, shoes. *Second Dress:* Smart red doublet and ...nks, yellow stockings and shoes, ruff.

SERVANTS.—Liveries, with a badge on the left arm.

RAWBOLD.—Leathern jerkin and trunks, grey stockings and high ...es, bald crowned wig, slouch hat.

ARMSTRONG.—Doublet and trunks, breastplate, black tights, ...ts, slouch hat and black feathers, sword, dagger, and pistols.

...RSON.—Brown doublet and short trunks, fleshings and boots, ...ch hat, large disguise cloak, dagger, pistols, and gun.

ROBBERS.—Dresses of various colours similar to the above.

HELEN.—White satin dress, ringlets.

BLANCH.—Black velvet body, pink petticoat trimmed with cotton lace, lace stomacher, ringlets, sugar-loaf hat, and red cloak.

BARBARA.—Plain brown merino body and skirt, straw gipsey hat.

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